LIGHT OF INDIA

QUINTESSENCE OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY
VEDAS, UPANISHADS
&
BHAGAVAD-GITA

by
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JAIN BROTHERS
PILANI—JODHPUR—UDAIPUR
JAIPUR—BHOPAL

Published by
M. L. Jain
For Jain Brothers
1756, Nai Basti
Queens Road, Delhi-6

Price : Rs. 12-50
Foreign : $ 4-00 or Sh. 30/-

Printed at
New India Press,
Connaught Circus,
New Delhi.

Dedicated to

MY MOTHER—GYANAMBAL

MY FATHER—VAIDYANATHAN

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PREFACE

My Beloved Reader,

I am presenting this book to be read by every man and woman in the world, and to arouse his and her thought. There is an inner urge in the heart of every one—a latent longing and searching for Light India has a Message to the modern world, to solve the passions and problems of individuals and nations

All religions preach the same Truth.

FROM DARKNESS LEAD ME TO LIGHT—says the Rishi in Upanishads

LEAD KINDLY LIGHT—says Jesus Christ.

HOLD THE LAMP UNTO YOURSELF—says Buddha.

Over a period of five thousand years, Religion and Philosophy continuously evolved in India The Hindu belief, Sanatana Dharma or ancient religion, is timeless and true for all time Science and spirituality seek the same Knowledge and Truth

The modern young man wants "instant" philosophy—as in every one of his other wants He has no time for hair-splitting arguments, and he does not want to get lost in the play of words and technical jargon I have therefore distilled the essence of Vedas, Upanishads, Darsanas, Puranas and Bhagavad-Gita, and given their pure perfume. I have

given refined extracts from original scriptures to enable the reader enjoy the taste of pure sweetness

The Bhagavad-Gita is the quintessence of Indian philosophy It must be read and re-read and contemplated upon It must your companion on your desk and bedside. It must be your constant friend, philosopher and guide

Maybe, you may not wish to believe in God or religion. But certainly you want Happiness, and you believe in the philosophy of Goodness, Order and Beauty, and you strive for Perfection.

Bhagavad-Gita says·

HE WHO LISTENS TO THIS TEACHING WITH FAITH SHALL OBTAIN SUPREME HAPPINESS AND ETERNAL BLISS.

Believe me, Beloved Reader,

Spiritually yours,

V. Lakshmi Narayanan

Swami Vivekananda :

"The whole world requires Light. It is expectant! India alone has that Light; not in magic, mummeries and charlatanism, but in teaching of the glories of the spirit of real religion—of the highest spiritual Truth That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitudes unto the present day. Now the Time has come"



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
Prophet of New India

I

LIGHT OF INDIA

India—Fountain of Spiritual Thought, ancient and modern

India is a perennial fountain of human thought spiritual, religious and philosophical. From the world's loftiest ice-bound mountain peaks of the Himalayas, crystal clear waters of thought have streamed down in torrents to quench humanity's insatiable thirst for knowledge

What is Indian thought and culture ? What is India's religion and philosophy ? What is Indian way of life ? What is India's message to the modern world ?

The modern Indian is bewildered when he is asked these questions Indian thought is such a vast complexity that it cannot be put in a nut-shell Yet, it must be presented in a sugar-coated tabloid form, and I have attempted to do so in this book to cure humanity's ills and give healthy nourishment

Indian civilisation is over 5,000 years old, and Indian thought has an unbroken evolution since the dawn of civilisation down to the present day Egypt, Babylonia and Greece had great civilisations handed over to us in the remnants of their wonderful architecture, sculpture and art India has preserved and given to the world a heritage of its loftiest thinking and humanism, philosophy and spirituality in its imperishable literature and tradition.

In the Indian Era, Kali Yuga, the year 1967 A D corresponds to 5067—i e. it commenced at 3100 B C The Kali Yuga or Black Age is synonymous with the Bronze and Iron Age with which civilisation began, when man kindled the hearth in his home, and lighted the flame for worship. The Kali Yuga beginning with the dawn of civilisation is the era in which darkness and ignorance were dispelled—and

when the black forests were converted to green fields. The Vedic hymn sings of the glory of Dawn and Sunrise

"The Dawn (Ushas) born in the sky has revealed
Herself and comes manifesting Her majesty
She has uncovered hostile things and hateful darkness.
She has awakened the true paths.
She bestows prosperity on the man who serves Her.
True in the true, great with the great, a Goddess with the gods,
Worshipped with the worshipful
Ye gods, protect us ever with your Blessings"

Before we understand Indian thought, we must understand India—the land and the people India is the focal centre of the eastern hemisphere and its four continents of Africa, Europe, Asia and Australia It is physically isolated in the north by the largest and loftiest mountain ranges in the world—the Himalayas. On three sides of the peninsula is the vast Indian Ocean with the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal

India has every conceivable type of climate from the coldest Himalayas to the hottest Deccan plateau, from the wettest Assam to the driest Rajasthan It has the richest variety of fauna and flora from the tropics to the arctics

In this land protected almost impenetrably all round by nature, man took shelter and evolved Negroid and Australoid races passed through leaving their remnants in the aboriginal tribes The Dravidian, Mongoloid and Aryan tribes came in, mingled and stayed The white, yellow and black races intermixed and developed the healthy suntanned golden brown colour that is typically Indian All these races had their primitive beliefs and cultures which persist till today—along with the highly developed Dravido-Aryan culture.

The Dravidians were the first civilised people to come into India. They belonged to the Mediterranean group Some of them settled down in the Indus Valley and developed a rich urban culture—as seen in Mahenjo-Daro, Harappa and other sites During that age—the Egyptians built with stone their fantastic temples and tombs on the Nile The Sumerians, on the Euphrates-Tigris valleys, used sun-dried clay for their buildings The Indus Valley people used burnt clay bricks The writing of Indus Valley people has not yet been deciphered, and nothing is known of their history They worshipped Pasupathi—Lord of the living beings. When the Aryans came, the Indus Valley people moved southwards and eastwards

The Dravidians settled in the whole of India—and intermixed with earlier people But it is in Southern India that Dravidian languages and culture developed, preserving to a large extent their original characteristics They worshipped Siva who later got identified with Rudra of the Aryans

The Aryans were an Indo-European race who came into India through the north-west They settled down on the banks of the Indus, Saraswati and Ganges and called the land Arya-varta which later became Bharat, Hindustan and India. The Aryans communicated their thoughts in Sanskrit —which word meant culture The Aryans assimilated and absorbed the culture and thought of earlier Dravidian and other peoples of the land. Right from the Vedas on to the Upanishads and Puranas, Sanskrit literature represents the contribution of all the intermixed cultures and peoples of India. The Indian culture today is a blended Dravido-Aryan culture.

It is necessary to understand the word 'Culture'. Culture is defined as the sum-total of integrated *learned* behaviour patterns which are the characteristics of the members of a society and which are therefore not the result of biological

inheritance It is not genetically predetermined. Culture is wholly the result of social invention. It is transmitted and maintained solely through communication and learning Culture is non-instinctive

Culture is manifest only in the behaviour, beliefs and attitudes of individuals. Yet culture is superindividual and superorganic in that each person as he is born and develops comes under the sway of pre-existing patterns of culture and is moulded or influenced by them.

The present culture of India is influenced by the past tradition and literature The future culture of India will be influenced by the writings and thoughts of present day thinkers

India has inherited a very rich and deep-rooted culture as revealed in its vast literature which has influenced its thought and tradition continuously over three thousand years It is the world's teacher in mathematics-decimal system, concept of zero, trigonometty, quadratic equations-and in grammar, phonetics, animal fables and parables Its philosophical thought, spirit of enquiry and self-analysis inspired the world from Greek philosophers to Goethe, Schopenhauer, Emerson and Thoreau The uniqueness of India's tradition is its integration and unification of philosophy, art and culture with religion.

Lin Yutang writes in his "Wisdom of India":

> "The basic material concerning the beliefs of Hinduism, and their modern leaders like Gandhi and Nehru is to be found in Hindu piety It is characteristic of Hindu thought that religion and philosophy are inseparable .
>
> "Only in India is religion still a living emotion today and the Christian doctrine of turning the other cheek could be turned into a national movement and practised by the masses only in India and no other country



JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
Maker of Modern India

in the world India's paradox is the pacifist's paradox the world over But peace can come only from non-violence and disbelief in force, and non-violence can come only from India, because Indians seem really to believe in it"

Gandhi—coming 2000 years after Buddha and Christ demonstrated to the world that human freedom and human rights can be obtained by the will of a nation through non-violent and peaceful means The mightiest empire in all history, the British Empire, gave India national freedom voluntarily, and retained continuing friendliness between the two nations with its conception of the Commonwealth. Other subject nations in Asia and Africa have since obtained their national freedom from British, French and Dutch imperialism The Negro people in U S A are getting their civil rights by adopting Gandhian philosophy and methods

Nehru followed Gandhi for securing world peace by his philosophy of neutralism and Panch-Shila, preventing violence and aggression, respecting integrity of nations, and by avoiding interference in the internal affairs and policies of nations The freedom and sovereignty of nations have to be basic and fundamental as human rights—for preservation of peace and progress

What is India's record in her long history? A L. Basham, in his book "The Wonder that was India" says .—

"In no other part of the ancient world were the relations of man and man, and man and the state so humane In no other civilisation were slaves so few in number, and in no other ancient lawbook are their rights so well protected as in Arthasastra No other ancient law-giver proclaimed such noble ideals of fair-play in battle, as did Manu In all her history of warfare, Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or of the assacre of non-combatants There was

sporadic cruelty and oppression no doubt, but in comparison with other conditions in early cultures, it was mild. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilisation is its Humanity........

"India was a cheerful land, whose people reached a higher level of kindliness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity."

India has a unique record of not waging a single aggressive war outside its frontiers for military or political power in all its long history On the other hand, its ancient prosperity and glory attracted foreign invaders from Alexander to Genghis Khan and Babar Portuguese and French tried to conquer India in vain The British conquered but quit the country

India allowed all foreigners to settle down in the country. They got absorbed and became one with the people—adding to the multi-splendoured culture of the country India is a land in which many religions took refuge Syrian Christians came in the 1st Century A D. The Jews and Parsis found a home here. The latest to find shelter is the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people

The American philosopher and historian, Will Durant, says in his Story of Civilization .

"One cannot conclude the history of India as one can conclude the history of Egypt, or Babylonia, or Assyria; for that history is still being made, that civilization is still creating ..

"It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to us such gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all, our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit, they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the *future* As invention, industry, and trade bind the

continents together, or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilizations more closely, and shall absorb, even in enmity, some of its ways and thoughts Perhaps, in return for conquest, arrogance, spoilation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisititve soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things "

The religion and culture of India spread to the whole of Asia—China, Japan, Burma and South-East Asia These countries absorbed Indian culture and developed Hindu art and sculpture—adding their own national genius Hinduism and Buddhism, Ramayana, and Mahabharata have left their permanent mark on the life of these countries Right from the caves of Mongolia and temples of Japan down to Angkor Vat of Cambodia, Borobudur of Java and Balinese temples, Indian Art and Culture has expressed its glory over centuries

Kaundinya—a Brahmin—went to Malaya, married a native princess and founded a dynasty there In Thailand, Siam, Cambodia and other countries, Brahmins are the priests (Raj Gurus) of the royalty till this day People use Sanskrit names

India did not have one Prophet and one Bible to confine its intellectual evolution in a straight-jacket The light of Indian thought has been kept burning bright by generations of Rishis, sages, teachers and saints—who have all had fullest freedom in free thinking and preaching They have left their thoughts in voluminous literature As happens in any religion, ritualism and dogmatic beliefs developed through the ages Mythology developed in the Puranas, and got inevitably mixed up with religion and philosophy

The Indian mind was receptive to all new and foreign thought Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam had their

impact—and influenced the development of Hinduism Orthodox Hinduism and Brahminism absorbed the essential features of Jainism and Buddhism To sum up, modern Hinduism represents all that is best in all the religions and philosophical thought in the world. The liberalism of Indian mind is illustrated by India declaring itself as a Secular State

Jawaharlal Nehru said:

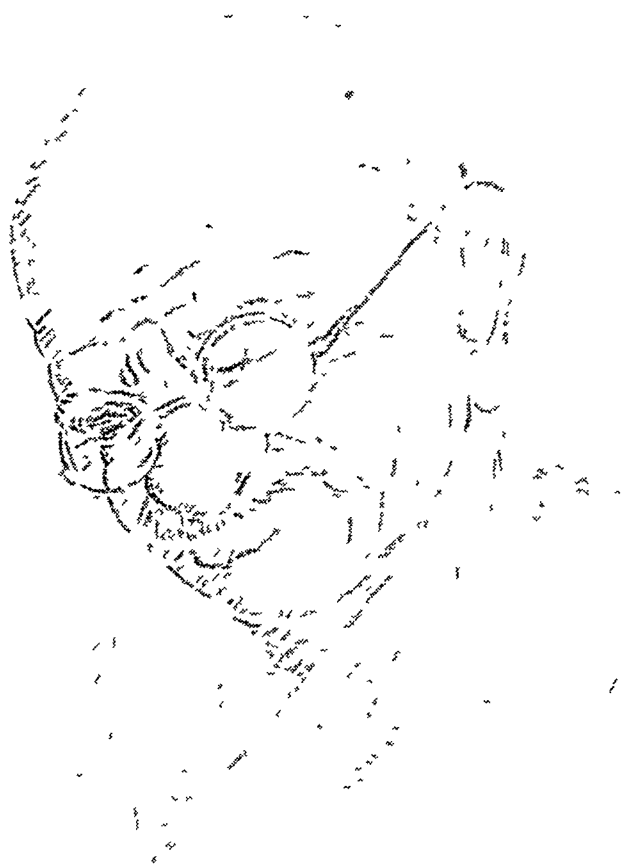
> "We have laid down in our Constitution that India is a secular State. That does not mean irreligion It means equal respect of all faiths, and equal opportunities for all, irrespective of the faiths they profess. We have therefore always to keep in mind this vital aspect of our culture which is also of the highest importance in India today."

Two thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher Plato dreamt of an ideal state when philosophers would be kings India elected its greatest philosopher—Radhakrishnan—as its Head of the State It put Philosophy on the political throne to usher a new era in world politics.

India is called the Punya Bhumi—the land of the virtuous It is called the Karma Bhumi—the land of the dutiful. We believe in spirituality. Our quest is after Truth, and in this search there is no conflict between spirituality and science Nehru says

> "The true scientist is the sage unattached to life and the fruits of action, ever seeking truth wheresoever this quest might lead him Scientists should note that they do not have a monopoly of the truth, that nobody has a monopoly—no country, no people, no book Truth is too vast to be contained in the minds of beings or in books, however, sacred"

The modern Indian today stands at the cross-roads of culture His state is best described in Jawaharlal Nehru's



MAHATMA GANDHI
Greatest Man in the World

own words,

> "I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere I have a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself."

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote his 'Discovery of India'—a monumental story of the Indian people He confessed his spiritual loneliness, which is shared by millions of his people including myself I have tried to remove this loneliness—and given spiritual comradeship in the pages of this book.

What is the unity in the seeming complexity and diversity of Indian culture and religion ? It is the quest after Truth (Satyam), Peace (Shantam), Beauty (Sundaram), Happiness (Sukham), Prosperity (Saubhagyam); and finally knowledge of God (Sivam)

What is our prayer ?

"Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya"—From Darkness lead me to Light, from Ignorance lead me to Knowledge

What is our national motto ?

"SATYAMEVA JAYATE"—TRUTH ALWAYS SUCCEEDS.

II

VEDAS—KNOWLEDGE SUPREME

The Vedas are the oldest scriptures in the world composed over 3500 years ago They were sung by Rishis (sages) who recorded their inner voice and Divine revelation. Vedas are called Sruti—what was heard They were compiled by the Great Rishi Vyasa.

The Rishis were heads of families and lived the life of perfect house-holders in the vedic society. The vedic hymns were composed by individual rishis and all their spiritual quests were towards the good and prosperity of the society. They were not lone hermits cut away from the community. They did Tapas (deep meditation) by which they kindled the inner fire of their spirit and obtained inspired truth and knowledge Among the great rishis were Bhrigu, Viswamitra, Gotama, Atri, Bharadwaja, Vasistha, Kasyapa, and Jamadagni There were women among rishis like Ghosha, Apala, Indrani and Saci Paalomi

There are four Vedas Rig Veda, Yajurveda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda The Rig Veda is the oldest and fundamental with over 10000 stanzas, and all the four Vedas have over 20000 stanzas The Vedas were learnt by heart and handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, and even today after 3000 years we continue the practice of reciting the Vedas from memory, and there are scholars who can recite the whole Vedas

Veda means knowledge The vedic sages commenced civilised man's quest after knowing the unknown, the nature of the universe and existence, and the laws of life They brightened their intellect and tried to find a meaning and solution for progress and prosperity of man and society.

The rishis were optimists and had a full zest for living. They searched for happiness and beauty. They tried to tune themselves to Rita rhythm and harmony of life, and Satya—truth in the world. They evolved Dharma—supporting principles and law, and Karma—plan of action, duty and right conduct.

The vedic thought is still fresh and applicable to the modern world Though essentially spiritual, it is scientific and logical in character—and is axiomatic The vedic thought has given us eternal values—and centuries have not dimmed the lustre of the Vedas

Western and Indian scholars have made literal translations and exhaustive treatises on the language of the Vedas which is in ancient Sanskrit These translations are difficult for the average man to read I have tried to distil the essence of the Vedas and have given it in modern language—to be read and to be contemplated upon.

When the Aryan immigrants were settling in the land of five rivers, they had to overcome stiff resistance from the original inhabitants—dasyus, nagas and asuras The vedic bards sang in this context, and their songs are full of praise for the heroes. They loved the country and wrote ecstatic poems on the motherland

The vedic people worshipped God through His manifestation in nature's phenomenon The hymns are addressed to the Deities or Devas Indra, Varuna, Agni, Mitra, Marut, Parjanya, Aditi and Saraswati But they identified the Deities with one another and with the one Supreme God (HE) or Supreme Being (THAT), BRAHMAN and AUM.

He is the One, the ONE alone
In Him all Deities become ONE alone
Agni is That, Aditya is That,
Vayu is That, Chandrama is That,
Light is That, Brahman is That,



VYASA

Editor of Vedas & Mahabharta

SELECTIONS FROM THE VEDAS

(Rig Yaju and Atharva)

Greetings to the Vedic Rishis

The Vedas were composed long before the written script was evolved The Vedic bards were greatly honoured and eagerly sought after, as people could hear the Vedas only from the singers

1 NAMASTE Hail to the Vedic Rishis.
The Hymns which you sing will be remembered and recited ages after ages, for all time
The songs are of love and praise
All glory be to people.
All glory be to you

2 People will hasten to listen to your songs, as a maiden hastens to her lover, and cling to Vedas as a child clings to its nursing mother.

3 The God-filled serene sages come in great succession
The holy chants are divinely inspired.
They shine with lustre in their unity, beauty and magnificence

Song of Creation

The Vedic Rishis by their meditation, speculation and inspiration obtained Divine Revelation Everything has a beginning, and there must be a Cause What was IT?

1 What was there before Creation began?
Where was this Universe ?
What womb enveloped it ?
Who gave it birth and protection ?

2 There was then neither Existence nor Non-existence.
There was neither this world, nor the sky nor the waters.

3. There was then no night or day
There was no life or death
Darkness was concealed in darkness.
All was Chaos
There was only the Void

4. There was then NOTHING other than the Supreme Being.
THAT ONE breathed in the Void by Self-Impulse
The ONE which was covered by the Void was thus manifested through the might of ITS OWN WILL.

5. In the beginning came Desire.
It was the primordial germ of Mind.

6. The Rishis, searching their hearts in meditation, realised that Non-existence was the mother of Existence.

7. Who really knows IT all ?
Who can explain IT ?
Whence was IT born ?

Whence and how came this Creation ?
The gods were created later.
Then who knows from where it came into being ?

8. That from which this creation came into-being, whether
IT held it together, or IT had not, only HE who supports
it in the highest region, truly knows it
May be even HE does not know.

Space and Time

Universal Order and Truth were born of the blazing
Spirit.
In the darkness of the Void, Night was born, and then
the ocean of Space.
From Space was born Time, years and days, measuring
every movement.
The Creator made the sun, the moon, the heavens, the
earth, the firmament and the region of Light.

Supreme Being

The Vedic Rshis named the Creator as the Supreme Being The bond that binds the Creator and the Created is Love. Prayer is the medium through which man communicates with God The Creator and the Created are one and the same

1 He is the Deity who pervades all the Universe.
He was the First-born
He who is once born, is to be born again and again.
He gets into every womb
He meets His own off-spring facing Him on all sides
Lord of Life, He rejoices in His own off-spring
He pervades the world of created things

2. He supports the heavens and the earth
He directs the vault of the sky and directs the light.
He sends the sphere of clouds in the mid-air
He is the Deity we shall worship with our prayers and sacrifice

3 Behold That Being hidden in Mystery
All things unite in Him
From Him everything issues forth.
He is Omnipresent.
He is the warp and woof of created things

4 He is our Mother, our Father and our Creator.
He makes all laws and all beings.
By His Grace we will attain eternal life and rise to the loftiest position

5 Having created all creatures, all worlds, all regions and directions, the First-born of the Eternal Order entered all created self into His own Self
He became That
He was That.

6. The all-pervading Guardian protects and upholds the immortal spheres and creatures.
He wears infinite beautiful forms
He moves about in His own splendour.
He looks after us, and He always abides in us.

7. He has given us Thought, swifter than Light to show the way among the fleeting things of the world.
With one mind and one wisdom, we must devoutly proceed to that One Intelligence.

8. The ears strain to hear, the eyes long to see the spark of Light within our Spirit.
What shall we think ?
What shall we see ?
The mind roams wild beyond its confines.

9. People know that the Divinity is revealed in the omniscient splendour of the Supreme Being, which is beyond description
It is the Divine Spirit that is the support of the Universe

10. He is the ONE support of the Universe in its Infinite forms, to whom holy men offer unbounded worship in their little places of prayer.

11. The contemplating sage beholds with wonder the mysterious Existence, wherein the Universe comes to have one Shelter.

Therein unites and therefrom issues the Whole of created things.

12. God is that to which all things converge.
God is that from which all things diverge.
He belongs to us and He belongs to the entire world.
He is Divine and yet He is Human.

13. God manifests Himself as the Lord of Creation.
It is He who bestows on us spiritual force and vigour.
God's image is in immortal life and death
We send our invocations to Him for guidance.

14. In the beginning of Creation, when the mighty waters came carrying the Primordial germ, the spirit of God dwelt in the flame of life.

15 He made the heavens with Truth as His Law
May He protect us, Father of the World

16 He is Lord of Our Prayers, first of Speech and Foremost.
The sages gave the Unknown a Name as God.
The Divine Secret reveals itself as LOVE in our hearts.

17. The sages strained and sifted their thoughts and composed the Song of the Vedic hymns.
Therein have men discovered the bonds of Love, whose divine beauty lies hidden in the Song

18. Undivided is He, undivided is His Spirit;
Undivided is His sight, hearing and life-breath,
Undivided is the whole of Him, though manifested in Infinite forms in the Universe

Spritual Knowledge

The Vedic Rishis intensely sought after knowledge and called it Truth. Every material thing obeys definite physical laws. What are the laws that govern the spiritual nature in man?

1 Step beyond the human limitations, and follow the Divine Spirit
Establish your spiritual leadership among your people

2 One act is done today, another act is achieved tomorrow. God constantly turns what is not into what becomes (action)

3 By self-dedication, you obtain consecration.
By consecration you obtain grace.
By grace you get reverence
Reverence leads you to Truth

4. Truth, Eternal Law that is Almighty, Consecration, Austerity, Prayer and Worship uphold this world

5 May supreme wisdom flow to us from all quarters; wisdom that is unconfused, uninterrupted and overflowing.

6. People have regarded the Supreme Existence as a branch of Non-existence
They take shelter and worship under this branch

7 How is it that the wind never ceases to blow?
Why do waters never stay stagnant and always flow?
Why is it that the mind never takes rest?

8. Prayer is our outer coat-of-mail,
Grace is our inner coat-of-mail, to protect us from all friends and foes

Song of Motherland

The Vedic people deeply loved their motherland. and burst into song about the loveliness of the country Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who composed "Vande Mataram" our national song, took his inspiration from the Vedic hymns. These hymns are in Atharva Veda.

1. VANDE MATARAM
   Motherland provides the many mountains and valleys
   and extensive plains where people live together
   The seas, rivers and lakes enable the land to grow the corn and food and support all life.
   May the land confer on us her bountiful yield

2. Motherland in which for ages men have done their manifold tasks, land in which waters flow perennially day and night, common to all living beings, may She pour on us her milk and nourishment to give lustre and magnificence to all.

3. Motherland! you have borne the living creatures—the bipeds and the quadrupeds.
   The Earth is the Mother, and Rain is the Father.
   May You both fill us with plenty

4. There lies the Fire of life-energy within the Earth—within the rocks and ores, and inside the plants and waters.
   There is the Fire within men, cattle and horses.
   The same Fire burns in the sun, and men offer their oblations in the sacrificial Fire.

5. We bow to Earth, which gives us power, plenty, food and drink.
   We depend on Thee, patient Earth, the Purifier.

6 Whatever we dig from the Land it gives growth again and again
May the seasons—spring, summer, autumn and winter —pour their abundance on us, day and night, year by year.

7 Men build the cities with their strength and toil
Men carry out their diverse work in the fields
Land bears all things in Her womb
May the Lord of Life make the country beautiful.

8 We go to battle with war cries and sounds of drums.
May the Land drive off our enemies and free us from our foes and aggressors

9 May this Land where people speak in various tongues, and worship with various religious rites, may She pour her treasure in her thousand streams

10 As the galloping steed scatters the dust, so does Earth scatter the people who dwell on her land
The Earth speeds on protecting the world, with all creatures, forests and trees

11. In villages and in all our assemblies, congregations and councils, Motherland ! we shall sing Thy praise in patriotic terms

12. Whatever we speak, we shall speak with sweetness
Whatever we see, we shall see with loveliness.
The land is peaceful, graceful and sweet-smelling
May Mother Earth give us Her nectar and Blessings.

Glory to the Warriors

During the Vedic period, people had to fight their struggle for existence, and protect themselves against aggressors. Leaders were greatly honoured and followed, and heroism was glorified Freedom from fear became an article of faith and religion, and hero-worship was cultivated

1. We follow our leader who will not bow to the fierce aggressor, nor to the traitor aided by the foe

2 May our heroes march forward with exultant spirits. with their arrows and whetted weapons sharp like flames

3 May our general defeat our foes and destroy their weapons with his valour and drive out the aggressors With our praise-songs and prayers, we shall make our general grow in his magnificent glory

4 Comrades ! follow the general.
Acquit yourselves like great heroes

5 March on forward !
Our warriors will conquer the foes and give us protection
May they be invincible with their valiant arms

Heroism

Comrades ! Hold together, stand erect, and cross over the flowing rocky stream of life.
Abandon the weak-hearted and the malicious, and reach the benign and pleasant banks beyond

Strain and pull together to achieve glory, and to become bright, pure and purifying.
May we get over the difficult paths led by our heroes, and may we enjoy and live a hundred years.

Freedom From Fear

Lead us to a free world, where lie divine lustre, light and security.

May there be no fear from the known or from the hidden unknown

May there be no fear in the day or in the night.
May all quarters be friendly to us

Give us the fiery spirit, O Lord !
Give us the manly vigour,
Give us the power,
Give us the energy,
Give us the battle-strength,
Give us the conquering might

Resolve for Goodness

The highest objective in life is to be good The Vedic prayer is a continuous resolve to be good.

1. May the Divine Essence, may that Light of lights, make our minds resolve on what is Good, whether in our waking or sleeping state.

2 May that which is deep knowledge-intellect and memory, that which is the undying flame in life, that without which nothing is done, make our minds resolve on what is Good

3 May that immortal Essence by which all past, present and future is comprehended, and may that by which worship is sustained, make our minds resolve on what is Good.

4. May that Power which transports men like the good charioteer who controls galloping horses with reins, may that Power which abides in the heart, quick and active, may that Power make our minds resolve on what is Good

Bliss of Married Life

Vedas pray for a blissful married life and for a sweet and happy home.

Come hither all together and see this most blessed bride, and wish her every fortune

Live you both together and be never separated
Rejoicing in your own home, sporting with your sons and daughters, enjoy the full measure of life.

May your mutual glances be most sweet, and may your faces glow with harmony.

Keep one another within your hearts, and let there be one single spirit dwelling in both of you

May your pleasant chamber be filled with cheer and laughter of your children.

Enjoying a beautiful home and good cattle, live the days pleasantly together in life's vocations.

Inviting friends to share your joys and wealth, worshipping together, be united through mutual love, and do honour to the gods

Wife to husband :

I am this, thou art that,
I am song, thou art verse,
I am heaven, thou art earth
We both together shall live
Protecting our progeny.

Family Harmony

Vedas teach how to ensure harmony in the family Love, unity and prosperity, heroic and eloquent children and long life are the objects of prayer.

May we have union of minds and hearts, and be free
from hatred
May we love one another even as the cow loves its calf.

Let sons be loyal to their father and let them be of one
mind with their mother
Let the wife speak to the husband gentle and honey-
sweet words.

Let brother not hate brother, and let sister not hate sister.
Let there be union in your aims, and with harmony
speak your words with affection.

Be not separated
Taking thought, thriving together and working under a
common bond, grow together
Your water-store shall be common, and your store of
food shall be common
Having a singleness of aim and mind, with love in your
hearts, follow your leader

May the Lord bless you with the best of treasures, clear mind, great brilliance, increase of wealth, health of body and sweet and happy days

May we become proud parents of fine heroes
May the son be good at home, efficient in work, shining
in assemblies and eloquent in councils.
May he bring glory and fame to his father

Lord! grant our warriors undying fame and glory.
Give us bounty of cattle and wealth in battles
Give us plenty and give us cheer.
May the shining Dawn drive out dark resistance.

To see, to know, to strive, to thrive, to rise, to be and to become,
May we live a hundred years or more

Wealth

The Vedas teach the axiom for materialistic prosperity. They enunciate the basic law of economics—the profit motive, and creating of wealth through wealth They extol agricultural pursuits and the workers

Let a man think well of wealth and prosperity
Let him win it by skill and lawful work
Let him use his own intelligence and ability to secure wealth.

Let him get profit both in purchase and sale, and be prosperous by exchange of goods and trade.

Let the wealth through which one carries on his trade increase, *wealth through wealth.*

Agriculture

May the plough-share turn the soil, and may the farmer happily feed his oxen.
May the land give food, water and honey, and give prosperity.

Water rises in a thousand streams and remains inexhaustible.
May the corn flow in thousand streams and remain inexhaustible.

The beautiful cows nourish the emaciated children, and bring loveliness and beauty to the body with their milk
The pleasant lowing of the cows makes the home happy, & the cows are beloved by the people, and—are worshipped

Workers

Diverse are the intelligence and callings of man
The carpenter gives shape to broken wood
The physician cures the diseased

With his bellows made of reeds and feathers, with hardened stones that spark and sharpen, the smith makes metals and gold

Charioteers and army leaders are the king-makers.
Workers are the kings

Charity

Vedas preach that Charity is the highest virtue, both for the individual and for the community.

Hunger and poverty are not the cause of death
Even to the rich and well-fed man death comes in many ways.

He who does not give charity will not find any friend.
The wealth of the charitable is never wasted.

He is not a friend who does not give to the needy man.
His home is not a home if he does not give shelter to a comrade.
Shun such a man and go to a stranger to seek comfort.

Let the rich man give liberally to all who seek his help.
Wealth revolves like a chariot-wheel—going up and coming down.
Let the rich man look longer ahead when the cycle of fortune may bring him down. Who will then help him ?

The miser who hoards his food is a fool
He only hastens his own end
He will not be cherished by his friend or even stranger
He is all Sin who eats all alone and who does not give.

Social Unity

The Vedas preach the principles of democracy, harmony and unity for welfare of the society

Meet together, speak together,
May there be harmony in your minds.
May your assembly be common
May your counsel be common
Keep a common goal before you
And worship in congregation.

May you have unity in your aims
May your hearts be of one accord
May all of you be of one mind
May you live together in harmony

May we have unity with our own people.
May we have peace with alien people.
May we create among all nations,
unity of hearts and brotherhood

Let not the battle-cry rise amidst the slain
Let not the arrows of war break the peace of day
May we not fight against the divine spirit within us
May we unite in our minds, and may we unite in our goals.

Peace

The ultimate quest and object to which all Vedic prayers are devoted is PEACE for the whole world

May there be peace in the sky.
May there be peace in the air
May there be peace on earth
May there be peace in the waters
May there be peace in plants
May there be peace amidst forest trees.
May there be peace in all things
May there be peace between all religions
May that peace come to us,
The peace of the Supreme Being,
The Peace of peace

OM ! Shanti ! Shanti ! Shanti !

III

UPANISHADS—GOD WITHIN YOU

The Upanishads were composed a few centuries after the Vedas—between 1000—500 B.c The Vedas sung by family priests were studied by a continuous line of sages who established family schools —'gurukuls'. The teachers held discourses or seminars with their disciples—by the method of questioning and discussing. The Vedanta Philosophy, which means the end or goal of vedic knowledge, took shape in the upanishadic schools. There are over 250 upanishads of which about 18 are more important ones.

Schopenhauer says ecstatically of the Upanishads: "From every sentence deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit.. In the whole world there is no study, so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads They are products of the highest wisdom The study of the Upanishads has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death." Max Muller, Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson, Thoreau and Romain Rolland were greatly influenced by the Upanishads

What is mind and what is matter ? What is the personality behind our consciousness ? What is the spirit of the universe, the Brahman ? What is Atman (individual self or soul), and what is Paramatman (Ultimate Self or Universal Soul) ? And what is God ?

The Upanishads give the answer.

God and Self

In the Upanishads, God is referred to variously as the Supreme Being, Brahman, Universal Self (or Soul) Param-

Atma, IT and THAT Man conceives God in his own image, He is called Ishwara, Purusha

The individual man's self is referred to as Self or soul or Atma God created man, whose self is therefore part of the Universal Self.

The Upanishad explains relation between Man and God his Self and the Universal Self

Who are You and what is You ?

You must know yourself—YOUR-SELF.

You have a body mechanism which is created out of material and is activated by energy—and which works for a limited period of time called life

You have Mind and Will—which is not your physiological brain You have Desire and Heart which is not your physiological heart You have Personality and Name which outlives your life You have Conscience which distinguishes good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice The Spirit or Soul or Self within you is not confined in your material and mortal body It is not limited by space and time It is the Eternal Self and Universal Self

Moses had a vision of God Moses asked God· "By what name shall I call you ?" and God replied. "That I am what I am" or "That I am what I is". There is a striking similarity with "Tat Tvam Asi" in the sound of the reply

Mundaka-Upanishad

1 The Supreme Being created the worlds of matter and energy, life, mind and spirit, and cause and effect

2 All this universe is God The wise man attains the knowledge of Self, and gets established in God, and does his duty

3 By truthfulness, right knowledge, and self-discipline is the Self to be obtained

4. Truth alone succeeds, not falsehood

5 A man's nature is purified by the serene light of knowledge and through meditation he can see Him

6 The Self cannot be gained by mere study, nor by intellect, nor by teaching It can only be gained by His Grace

7 The Self cannot be realised by one who is without faith or earnestness or self-discipline

8 Having secured knowledge of Vedanta, having purified their minds by self-lessness and practice of yoga (meditation), the sages become tranquil, free from desires and get perfection

9 As the flowing rivers reach the ocean and lose their name and form, so does the individual man freed from name and form and ego, reach the divine Being and become immortal

Kena Upanishad

1 That which cannot be seen or heard, but which makes you see and hear is Self (God) within you That which cannot be comprehended by the mind, but which makes the mind comprehend is the Self (God) within you

2 When a man is aware of his Self through every conscious state of himself, he sees Reality and Truth

Isavasya Upanishad

1. All that is in this world belongs to God. Do not covet wealth which is created by God for all men
2 The Self is the moving spirit which supports your actions. It is swifter than your thought, and cannot be reached by your physical senses It stays within you and yet is outside you
3. God pervades all things He is pure and unaffected by evil So is your Self pure.
4. Those who seek what is not known and what is not manifested see great darkness before them Those who delight in what is known and what is manifested become aware of the still vaster darkness before them
5 The face of Truth is veiled and covered Remove the veil and see the Truth The person within you is God.

Katha Upanishad

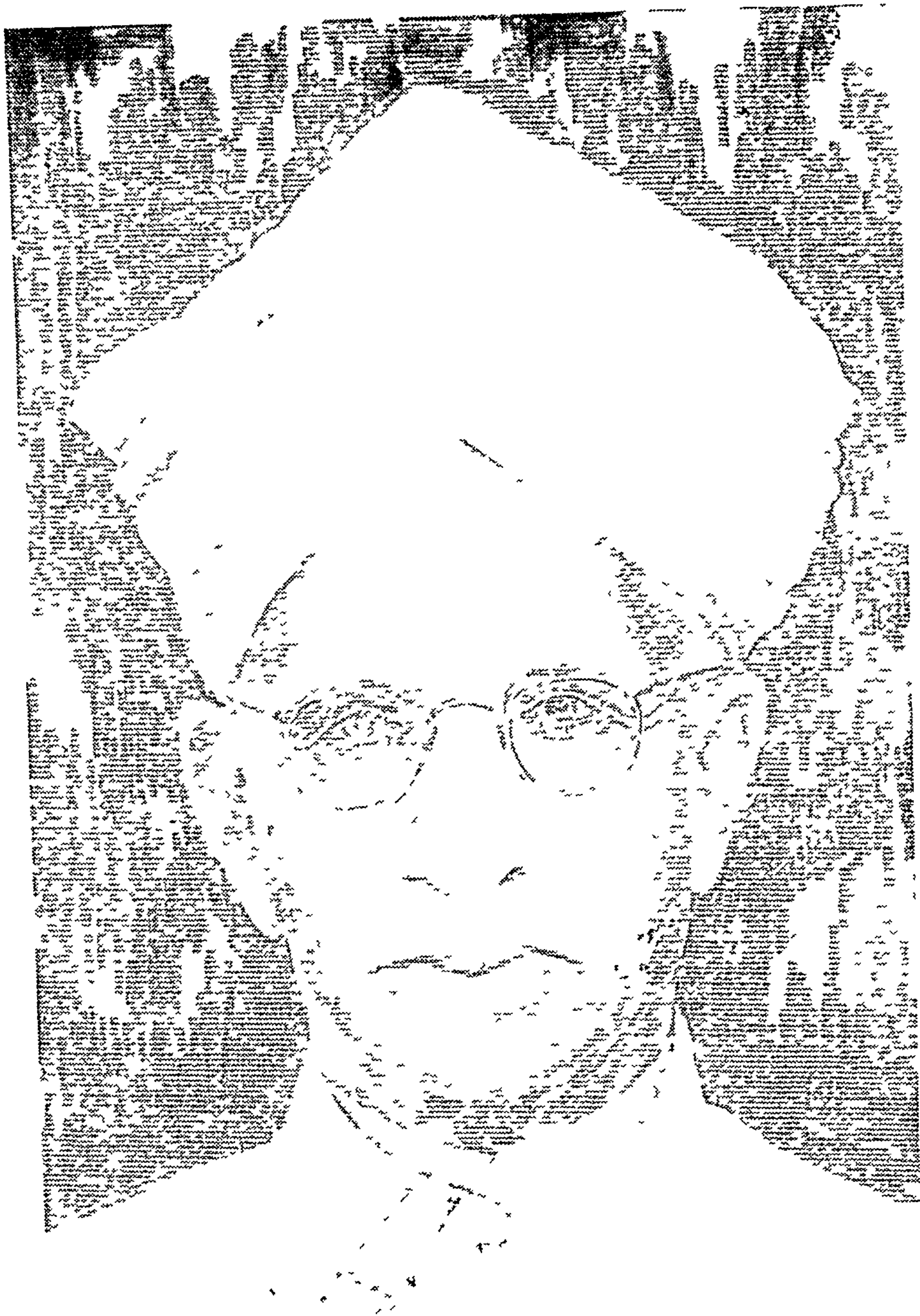
1 The wise man chooses what is good, and not what is pleasing.
2 The unwise man is steeped in ignorance, and is self-conceited with his own little knowledge
3 The Self is eternal It does not cease to exist when the body dies
4 A man who has not discarded evil, and who has not controlled his mind, and who does not acquire tranquility and balance cannot know his Self
5 Beyond the senses are the essences, beyond the essences is the mind, beyond the mind is the understanding, beyond the understanding is the great Self. Turn your eyes inward and see your inner silent Self
6 The one Ruler, the Self within all beings makes His one Form manifold If you perceive Him within yourself, you obtain eternal happiness and peace God is to be realised by your thought, mind and heart Communion with God gives you the highest state of Yoga—that is Bliss

Prasna Upanishad

1. What are the powers that go to sleep in a man when he goes to sleep, and what are they that are awake when he is awake ? Who is it that witnesses the dreams and whose is the happiness ?
2. All rays of the setting sun disappear in one orb of light. When the sun rises again, the rays of light spread out again Even so is the light of Self, and the physical senses disappear when a man goes to sleep But the mind and the spirit of Self remain awake in sleep The Self is awake when the body is unawake, the Self is active when the senses are inactive, the Self is conscious when the body is not conscious When the man wakes up, the physical senses and consciousness re-appear and even as the "blinding" rays of sun light up the body, the Self gets into the shadow

Mandukya Upanishad

1. In the waking state, one recognises external objects In the dream state, one recognises internal objects and memories In the state of deep sleep, external and internal objects become unified, and desire disappears
2. In the State of Self-consciousness (or God-consciousness) cognition of external and internal objects and desires disappear, there is the essence of oneness of the Self which cannot be described It is benign, peaceful, and non-dual, and the individual self becomes one with the Universal Self. This is the highest state of Bliss



RADHAKRISHNAN
Philosopher—Ex-President

Chandogya Upanishad

1. God who consists of mind, whose Body is life, whose Form is light, whose Will is Truth, whose Soul is space, pervades the whole world—silent and unmoved
2. He is the Self within your heart, smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. The whole cosmic space is within your heart. Self is Brahman (God).
3 The world is the sacrificial fire: the sun itself is the fuel, the day the flame, the moon the embers, the stars the sparks. Man is himself a sacrifice, his death is his final ablution.
4 That which is the subtle essence and has the whole world as its Soul is the Reality That is the Self· Thou art That.
5. There is no real happiness in anything that is finite. the Infinite alone is true Happiness
6. He who understands that life springs from the Self, does not see death, nor suffering nor sorrow nor sin
7. What is called SPACE is the revealer of forms and names That in which these are contained is Brahman. That is Immortal Self
8. If there were no speech, neither right nor wrong would be known, neither, truth nor untruth, neither good nor bad, neither pleasant nor unpleasant. Speech indeed makes all this known.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

1. When a man considers others as different, he gets rejected by others If he considers himself as one with others, he belongs to all and gets accepted All humanity becomes one Self
2. When a man is embraced by his wife, both become one within and without, and the two cease to exist as separate individuals The duality is lost when love unites both When a man embraces his Self, he becomes one with himself and all humanity is in his Self Love is one with lovers, even as sweetness is one with sugar

3 The doer of good becomes good; the doer of evil becomes evil, the lover of God becomes God

4 Practice self-control, charity and compassion.

5 Lead me from the unreal to the Real;
Lead me from darkness to Light;
Lead me from death to Immortality

Swetasvatara Upanishad

1. What is the cause ? What is the end ? What is pleasure and pain ?
Time, nature, elements, energy are the various aspects of the cause apart from the soul. God rules over all these causes from time to soul.

2 The soul is the enjoyer and is bound to the material body and can be freed from pleasure and pain when it knows God.
The body is mortal and God is immortal
When the soul knows the object of true enjoyment, God, it is freed from its bondage to mortal body.

3 Ignorance is perishable and can be overcome. Knowledge is imperishable

4 A man should practice self-control (Yoga) and he gets a healthy body By meditation he acquires knowledge of God, freeing himself of Maya—the mysterious veil of Nature

5 God has enveloped this world with Maya Creation has unfolded itself through His Will Infinity is THAT. Infinity is THIS Out of Infinity comes the Infinity. When Infinity is subtracted from Infinity, Infinity remains

Aitareya Upanishad

That which is described as heart and mind, that which is consciousness, perception, discrimination, intelligence, wisdom, impulse, decision—all these are the aspects of divine Intelligence. The world is guided by Intelligence. Intelligence is God

Taittiriya Upanishad

Speak the truth and do not swerve from truth
Do your duty and do not swerve from duty.
Do not neglect welfare and prosperity.
Do not neglect study and the teaching of knowledge (Veda).
Worship your father; worship your mother, worship your teacher, and worship your guest
Practice good and blameless actions
Give with sincerity and faith Give generously In giving, be modest, humble and sympathetic
When you get a doubt about what is right and what is wrong and what to do, follow the examples of learned and virtuous teachers.

IV

DARSANAS—SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY—LOGIC & REASON

The Vedas revealed the macro-cosm The Upanishads revealed the micro-cosm. The discourses of the upanishadic schools generated philosophical thought. Hindu philosophers tried to find the meaning of art and life, and the attainment of highest aspirations of man through Faith, Understanding and Realisation. The object of all Philosophy is to overcome sorrow, pain and suffering and to obtain Salvation or release (Moksha) from ignorance.

Between 600 B C. and 100 B.C. Hindu philosophical thought evolved and got classified into six systems called Darsanas Darsana means insight The six Darsanas are not different systems but are rather six chapters on Philosophy—because they have common fundamental beliefs and objects for obtaining Salvation. The six Darsanas are:—

(1) Nyaya
(2) Vaisesika
(3) Sankhya
(4) Yoga
(5) Mimansa &
(6) Vedanta

(1) Nyaya

Nyaya was founded by Gotama Nyaya means analysis or going into a subject It is the science of pure reasoning, analytical investigation and critical examination of the objects of knowledge by logical methods The means of obtaining right knowledge are perception and inference Intelligence helps to discern and judge the right thing It over-

comes attraction, aversion and delusion—and by clear thinking is attained a state of highest bliss and salvation. Nyaya explains the means of studying, listening and judging, removing doubts and confirming what has been passed down through tradition and thereby getting mature wisdom.

(2) VAISESIKA

Vaisesika was founded by Kanada. Visesa means individual characteristics or properties Vaisesika enunciates the atomic theory of the universe—and is based on the science of physics Nature is said to be composed of five elements· earth, air, water, fire and akasa (or ether) The atoms are permanent but could be transformed from one substance to another The Vaisesika also defines non-atomic substances ('dravyas') like time, space, soul and mind, It postulates dualism of matter and soul

The Vaisesika school believes that atoms combine to form molecules and material objects which have differing characteristics Indian atomic theories were developed by pure intuition and logic, but they agree with the theories of modern physics based on experimentation The Iron Pillar of Delhi is an example of the heights reached by ancient Indian science The iron pillar has not rusted over 2000 years and modern science has yet to find rust-free iron

In Vaisesika we find the earliest example of philosophy based on pure scientific thought The name of the founder of the school, Kanada, is derived from Kana—atom, and ad-to eat, meaning atom-eater or atom-smasher He explains that the nature of reality can be known by a knowledge of the distinguishing properties and characteristics of nine eternal realities—earth, water, air, fire, ether, time, space, mind and soul Vaisesika created a school of materialistic philosophy which Budhism followed up.

(3) SANKHYA

Sankhya was founded by Kapila Sankhya means "number" or "counting"—and it is philosophy based on mathematical reasoning It is the oldest school of philosophy and it is enumeration of the principles of cosmic evolution by rational analysis and distinguishing Spirit and Matter It is universally agreed that Soul is really free and devoid of all suffering, and when misery torments the soul, it is really due to the misery of the body

Sankhya teaches that the world order is the result of reason and intelligence There is an exact selection of means for producing definite ends The world is not an accidental or a random series of events, but there is a definite order, regulation, function and system. The universe is dynamic, eternally unfolding, evolving and moving It is impossible for the human intellect to define the Uncaused Cause, because it is beyond space, time and thought

Sankhya postulates two ultimate realities Purusa (Spirit) and Prakriti (Matter) Purusa is the soul of the universe, the activating principle in nature, causing life to live. and consciousness to be conscious It is the universal spirit—eternal, immortal, uncaused, formless and changeless It is the ultimate intelligence, which directs cosmic evolution with mathematical precision, creating cosmos out of chaos It is the silent witness of nature

Prakriti is the Primeval Nature or Cosmic Substance—out of which all things are created and to which all things eventually return Cause and effect are only different aspects of the same thing, there is only change of form and appearance The manifestation of phenomenal world is evolution, involution and dissolution of Cosmic Substance (Prakriti) Prakriti is eternal, limitless and immanent It is the potential power of becoming and instrumental cause of action

Prakriti (Cosmic Substance) has three Gunas or intrinsic qualities —

Sattwa Guna (Truthfulness)—is the potential force in nature to enlighten and maintain balance and equilibrium. It signifies truth, wisdom, beauty, goodness and virtue

Rajasa Guna (Activeness)—is the dynamic force of nature which causes movement, overcomes resistance and does work It signifies energy, passion, forcefulness and action

Tamasa Guna (Inertness)—is the inertia force of nature which restrains and obstructs change from static condition. It signifies ignorance, inaction and wretchedness

The phenomenal world is the result of imbalance and interaction among the three gunas.

The formless Cosmic Spirit (Purusa) cannot act by itself without a medium The Cosmic Substance (Prakriti) cannot move without the animating force of Purusa Spirit (Purusa) and Prakriti (Matter) co-exist and by the marriage or union of these two existence is produced

Sankhya explains the Ahamkara—Self-consciousness or Ego This is the Individuating Principle which causes separation, limitation and gives individuality and variety.

(4) *Yoga*

Yoga system of philosophy was founded by Patanjali. Yoga means yoke, join or unite—body and spirit Yoga aims at perfection, by physical, mental and spiritual culture. The perfection of bodily health is achieved by practising asanas or postures which give poise and balance to muscular, circulatory, breathing and nervous systems in the body Control over the senses is obtained by concentration of mind (citta or manas) and intellect (budhi) Meditation arouses the ego (ahamkara) or self-consciousness The goal of Yoga is to attain kaivalya or samadhi or state of oneness or union with Ishwara or God, and to become a yogi, the perfect man and saint

Yoga teaches ethics and morality and observance of right conduct —Non-injury or non-violence (Ahimsa) of thought, word and deed removes animosity. Truthfulness gives good sense Non-thieving or non-greed (Aparigraha) or non-covetousness removes the greatest cause of misery which is possessiveness Above all contentment secures the highest form of pleasure

By practice of yogic exercises and concentration—we can achieve extra-ordinary powers There are many Hatha-yogis in India today who can stop breathing and heart-beat and remain buried for days Hatha-yogis have demonstrated "weightlessness" of the body and can float in the air, some can swallow concentrated nitric acid and eat glass defying all biological mechanism The yogis in the ice-covered Himalayas remain naked and uncovered and without food for months. They have demonstrated superlative powers of thought-waves Such feats of yogic practice are only demonstrations of what the human body can endure and achieve if it is properly controlled and the latent powers are developed

But the true aim of Yoga is not for demonstration of the powers of yogic practice The true yogi is an enlightened one—radiating spiritual magnetism and light, and acting as beacon light to the distressed souls in the world

There are eight steps in the development of a yogi —

1 Yama self control through non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, non-covetousness and chastity.
2 Niyama Self-discipline and practice of the above.
3 Asana Body control through asanas or postures
4 Pranayama Control and regulation of breathing.
5 Pratyahara Restraint over physical senses
6 Dharana Concentration of mind.
7 Dhyana Meditation
8. Samadhi Deep meditation—or getting into trance—state in which the human soul is dissolved in God



SANKARACHARYA

Greatest Philosopher-Advaita (Monism)

(5) MIMAMSA

The Mimamsa philosophy was founded by Jaimini The root of the term "man" is to think, consider, examine and investigate Mimamsa means enquiry and explains the principles of right action and duty—Dharma. Without action, knowledge is useless, happiness cannot be attained, and human destiny cannot be fulfilled Right action or Dharma is the very essence of life. Dharma is an object distinguished by a command Mimamsa explains the Vedic texts and enunciates Karma—right action, and Jnana—right knowledge Mimamsa is orthodox Theology It teaches that the Vedas are eternal, self-existent and authoritative Mimamsa develops logic, dialectics and semantics, and the Hindu Code of Law arose out of it

(6) VEDANTA

The Vedanta system of philosophy was founded by Badarayana Vedanta means the end or goal of Veda or knowledge It sums up all the knowledge of Vedas, upanishads, and darsana systems of philsophy Vedanta accepts all thoughts, ideas and concepts in the quest after Truth. It investigates, analyses and criticises everything on a logical examination, and reconciles all systems in a comprehensive and integrated manner—without being dogmatic It teaches that by mere study alone Truth cannot be known—because intellect has its limitations Intuition and spiritual faith and conviction are needed to experience knowledge of the Ultimate Principle Illumination of the mind, and spiritual progress can be attained only by performance of one's duties and by right conduct and character through a four-fold discipline:—

(1) Viveka—Right discrimination by serious study
(2) Vairagya—Right determination by dispassionate and unselfish action

(3) Satsampat—Right conduct through—
   (a) Sama—Control of mind
   (*b*) Dama—Control of senses
   (*c*) Uparati—Tolerance and liberality
   (*d*) Titiksa—Endurance and fortitude
   (*e*) Sraddha—Unswerving faith
   (*f*) Samadhana—Mental equilibrium and freedom from inertia

(4) Mumuksutva—Right desire to know the Ultimate Truth

Vedanta postulates the principle of Maya—the mystery or illusion of Universal Matter It is the force which measures out the immeasurable, and creates forms in the formless The world phenomenon is an endless chain of fleeting forms and fleeting movements The mind is steeped in ignorance, and it is knowledge alone that can remove the veil of Maya and make us see the Reality Vedanta shows that the world with its infinite variety is only an appearance and that all objects are one and the same though appearing differently—a dream, a mirage and phantasy.

Max-Muller says of Vedanta —

"It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedanta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of a Gothic Cathedral None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant or Hegel has ventured to erect such a spire never frightened by storms and lightings. Stone follows on stone in regular succession, after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been but One, as there will be but One in the end, whether we call it Atman or Brahman "

V

PURANAS —VICTORY OF RIGHT OVER MIGHT

The Puranas are the great religious literature containing the mythology, cosmology, legends and very ancient stories and ballads. Right from the Vedic time there were professional story-tellers (Aitihasikas, Pauranikas) and bards (Sutas) who sang heroic songs (Gathas) and travelling singers (Kusilawas) The Puranas were compiled in their present form by literary sages between the third and sixth century A D While the Vedas, Upanishads, Darsanas and Sastras were taught at Gurukuls to the intellectual classes—Brahmanas and Kshattriyas, the Puranas were sung to the large masses of people Religious and philosopical truths, ethics and morals were taught to the public—illustrated by the stories in the Puranas Theoretical and abstract knowledge in Philosophy is difficult for the common man to understand But stories of great heroes, their human passions and weaknesses, and the victory of right over might, have a direct appeal to all work-a-day classes of people.

There are a large number of Puranas but the major Puranas are eighteen —Brahma, Padma, Vaishnava, Saiva, Bhagvata, Naradiya, Markandeya, Agneya, Bhavishya, Brahmavaivarta, Lainga, Varaha, Skanda, Vamana, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda, and Brahmanda

The central theme of the Puranas is to give faith and hope to humanity by God who makes His appearance on earth to protect and save people when all seems lost by evil forces and power. There are ten Avataras or Incarnations—descent of God on earth·—

(1) Matsya—the Fish;
(2) Kurma—the Tortoise
(3) Varaha—the Boar
(4) Narasimha—the Lion-Man
(5) Vamana—the little Man;
(6) Parasurama—Man the coloniser;
(7) Rama—the King
(8) Krishna—the Philosopher;
(9) Buddha—the Intellectual and
(10) Kalki—the Incarnation of the Future

The ten Avataras indicate with surprising scientific accuracy the evolution of life and intelligence. Darwinian theory is revealed in the progressive appearance of the Fish, the Tortoise, the Boar and the Lion—evolution of life from the Marine, the Amphibian and the Land stages of development to most powerful and lordly Lion; the evolution of Man—from the little Vamana who strode the earth to Parasurama who with his axe and plough colonised it Rama was the ideal king and Krishna the ideal philosopher Buddha represents the height of intellectual advancement The Kalki Avatar is yet to come—and it is the only Hope which can save the Future of Humanity from the holocaust threatened by Nuclear weapons of destruction

Apart from the eighteen Puranas, are the two great historical epics (Itihasa Puranas)—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata



VALMIKI

Epic Poet of Ramayana

VI

RAMAYANA—IDEAL MAN AND SOCIETY

Ramayana is the greatest and immortal epic poem written by Valmiki who, with prophetic insight, says in the introduction

> "As long as in this firm-set land
> The streams shall flow and the mountains stand,
> So long throughout the world, be sure,
> The great Ramayana shall endure"

The Ramayana is a grand picture of the ancient times Rama is the ideal man, warrior, son, husband and king, Sita the ideal woman and wife, Lakshmana the ideal brother, Bharata the ideal of loyalty, Hanuman the ideal warrior. Ramayana is a thrilling drama of human passions and weaknesses, conquest over the evil, and establishment of the ideal kingship—Ramarajya. The story of Ramayana is well-known, but I shall narrate its special features

Dasaratha was a great emperor with his capital at Ayodhya. He had three wives and four sons—Rama (mother Kaushalya), Lakshmana and Satrugana (mother Sumitra), Bharata (mother Kaikeyi) Rishi Viswamitra gave the four boys their education and martial training in his gurukul Sita was a foundling child adopted as daughter by king Janaka—her unknown parentage did not stand in the way of her being brought up as a kshattriya princess Rama attended her Swayamvara and exhibited his superior prowess by handling a great iron bow, and won the hand of Sita Dasaratha decided to retire and hand over his crown to his eldest son, Rama Kaikeyi (his juniormost queen) fell a victim to palace intrigue by her evil-minded and crafty maid—Manthara Years earlier, Kaikeyi had accompanied Dasa-

ratha to the battlefield in his chariot. The cotter-pin of the chariot-wheel gave way—and Kaikeyi held it in position by using her own thumb as the cotter, and Dasaratha won the battle As a reward, he had given her three boons, which she could have whenever she so desired Kaikeyi now demanded the fulfilment of the boons—Rama should be sent into exile for 14 years, and her son, Bharata, should ascend the throne during the period. Dasaratha was wrought with grief but could not break his word. So on the eve of the coronation day, Rama went into exile—willingly to obey his father's words and his step-mother's wishes. His wife, Sita and brother, Lakshmana accompanied him. Dasaratha died of a broken heart Bharat was not in town when all this tragic drama happened. When he arrived, he chastised his evil-minded mother and refused to ascend the throne. He went in pursuit of Rama to persuade him to come back and occupy the throne When he met Rama, the latter declined to return saying that he was in honour bound to carry out his father's command Bharat brought back Rama's sandals—which were kept on the throne.

In his exile in Dandakaranya—the southern forest—Rama carried the Aryan Dharma and culture to the aboriginal people there One story of the catholicity of the age may be related Ahalya, wife of Rishi Gautam, had been cursed by her husband and petrified into a "rock". She had erred unknowingly when Indra met her disguised as her husband Rama gave her salvation and released her from her curse and sin.

Surpanaka—a Rakshasa princess—was attracted by the beauty of handsome Rama She was snubbed by Rama, and the infuriated and rejected Surpanaka vowed vengeance. She told her brother, Ravana, king of Lanka, of the beauty and charms of Sita Ravana became infatuated with the beauty of Sita He kidnapped her when Rama and Laksh-

mana were away from their forest camp, and carried her off to Lanka. Sita refused to marry him—and she was imprisoned in Ravana's castle Rama suffered from bitter anguish when he found that Sita had been kidnapped Rama gathered an army of Vanaras—Anaryas or Non-aryans (not "monkeys"), led by their great chief Hanuman Rama and Lakshman defeated Ravana and killed him in battle. This great victory is even today celebrated on the Dasehara all over India—by burning the effigy of Ravana the evil, by Rama the Good

Rama returned to Ayodhya after his 14 years of exile, and ruled over Ayodhya He was a perfect king—and Ramarajya was the ideal of benevolent government What is Rama Rajya ? Hear it in Valmiki's words

"And it is told by ancient sages, during Rama's happy reign,
Death untimely, dire disease, came not to his subject people,
Widows wept not in their sorrow for their lords untimely lost,
Mothers wailed not in their anguish for their babes by Yama crost,
Robbers, cheats and gay deceivers tempted not with lying word,
Neighbour loved his neighbour and the people loved their lord !
Trees then ample produce yielded as returning seasons went,
And the earth in grateful gladness never failing-harvest lent, Rains descended in their season, never came the blighting gale,
Rich in crop and rich in pasture was each soft and smiling vale,
Loom and anvil gave their produce from the tilled and fertile soil,

And the nation lived rejoicing in their old ancestral toil."

But there was a fly in the ointment. People talked—and questioned—whether a "kidnapped" women could sit on the throne. Rama suffered from bitter torment. He loved truly and dearly his wife, Sita, who he knew was absolutely pure and chaste, inspite of having been kidnapped by Ravana. However, he decided that the Queen, like Caesar's wife, must be above suspicion. He banished his pregnant wife, Sita, from his kingdom—and sacrificed his personal love to satisfy the people's sentiments. Sita took refuge in Valmiki's ashram She gave birth to the twin sons of Rama. Lava and Kusha grew up trained as warriors by Valmiki. It was then that Valmiki related the story of Rama to the boys—but without revealing to them that Rama was their father. In due course, Lava and Kusha came to the court of Rama and sang the story of Ramayana Rama got greatly moved by the epic song He brought back Sita from the forest But he asked Sita to walk through an ordeal of fire once more to publicly demonstrate her purity. Sita replied that Death alone was the greatest purifier—and disappeared into the bosom of her Mother-Earth. Said Sita.

"If unstained in thought and action I have lived from day of birth,
Spare a daughter's shame and anguish, and receive her Mother Earth !
If in duty and devotion I have behaved undefiled,
Mother Earth! who bore me, once again receive thy child !
If in truth unto my husband I have proved a faithful wife,
Mother Earth ! relieve thy Sita from the burden of this life "

The Ramayana is a poignant drama of the trials and travails of human love and passion, and sacrifice of individual love and comfort for maintenance of good, just and moral society Rama, Sita, Lakshman, Bharat and Hanuman

illustrate in their lives how men and women should follow right conduct when faced with the challenging problems. situations and doubts in human life Ramayana has been giving spiritual solace, philosophy and guidance to billions of men and women in India

All the puranas and the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were written in Sanskrit. They were later translated in the languages in India and reached the masses throughout the length and breadth of the country Ramayana written by Kamban is one of the greatest literary masterpieces in Tamil. Ram Charit Manas written by Tulsidas is one of the most popular books written in Hindi preaching devotion. Tulsidas sang

"Grant me, O Master, by Thy Grace
To follow all the good and pure
To be content with simple things,
To use my fellows not as means but ends
To serve them stoutly, in thought, word, deed;
Never to utter word of hatred or shame,
To cast away all selfishness and pride,
To speak no ill of others.
To have a mind at peace,
Set free from care, and not led astray from Thee
Neither by happiness nor woe
Set Thou my feet upon this path,
And keep me steadfast in it,
Thus only will I please Thee and serve Thee right."

VII

MAHABHARATA—STORY OF LIFE

The Mahabharata is the great story of the Bharatas, a royal race which gave India its name—Bharat. The Mahabharata is the world's greatest epic poem—with over 100,000 Slokas or verses. It is a whole literature by itself—compiled by Vyasa. It is an encyclopaedic manual of morals (Dharma) of practical life (artha), of human love and aesthetics (kama) and of spiritual salvation (Moksha). What is not written in it, can be found nowhere else in the world

The Mahabharata is a narrative of the great struggle for political power between Pandavas and Kauravas. The Pandavas were five brothers: Yuthisthra (Dharamaraja)—a great and just king, Bhima, a giant fighter; Arjuna, a superlative archer and romantic hero; Nakula and Sahadeva. All the five brothers were married to Draupadi—revealing polyandry which persists in the Himalayan states even today. The Kauravas were 101 brothers, led by Duryodhana. When the king of Bharatas, Pandu (father of Pandavas) died, his brother Dhritarashtra (father of Kauravas) came to the throne The struggle for succession started between the cousin princes with all intrigues and alliances with princes of other states

In a gambling of dice between Dharma Raja and Duryodhana, Dharma Raja lost The Pandavas were sent into exile for 14 years The Mahabharata relates many legends and heroic tales during the exile· even today in all parts of the country are caves and places where Pandavas are said to have roamed and rested

Krishna

Vasudeva was the prince of Yadavas at Mathura. His brother, Kamsa, usurped the throne and put into prison Vasudeva with his queen Devaki. Their son, Krishna, was born in prison; the child was secretly smuggled out, as Kamsa had vowed to kill all their children. Krishna grew up among the cowherds and was brought up by his foster-parents Nanda and Yashoda Krishna grew up to become the hero and leader of Yadavas and in due course killed Kamsa, and ascended the throne

Krishna became the great friend of Arjuna and ally of Pandavas. He tried hard as a peace-maker between the Kauravas and Pandavas At the end of their exile, Pandavas demanded the restoration of their kindgdom which the Kauravas refused This led to the great battle of Kurukshetra, where all the forces of Pandavas and Kauravas with all their respective allies waged a fierce battle for 18 days—at the end of which Pandavas won the battle

Yuthisthra regained his kingdom and ascended the throne. The Mahabharata gives a dynamic account of the great battle of arms and is an intimate record of military warfare and strategy of those times.

VIII

GREAT TEACHERS OF ETHICS & MORALS

Apart from the orthodox systems of philosophy, there were some free-thinking schools believing in atheism, scepticism, materialism, epicureanism and existentialism like Carvakas and Lokayatas.

Jainism

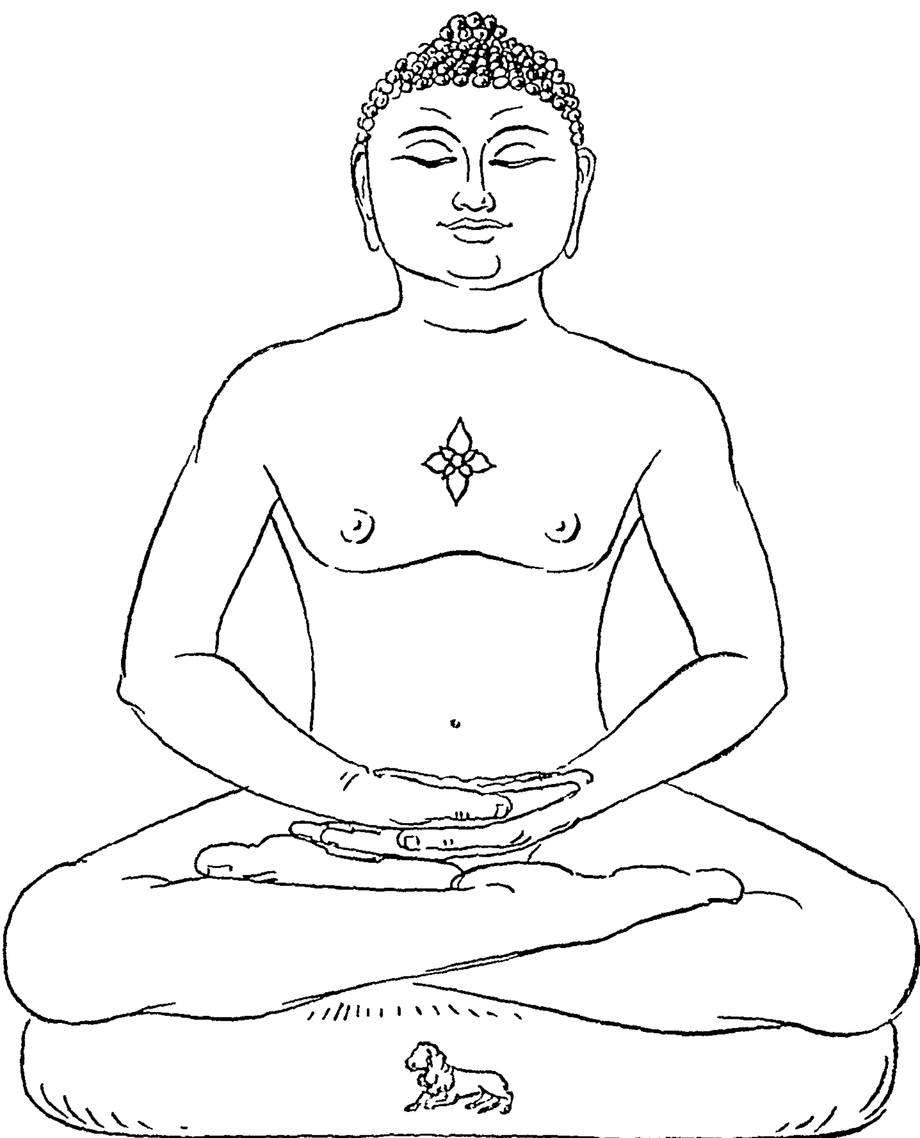
Mahavira Vardhamana lived in the 5th century B C. and his teachings gave rise to Jain philosophy. Jainism believes that the individual soul 'jiva' (life) is closely enmeshed in matter, and its salvation lies in the regaining of the pristine purity by freeing it from the body, so that it can enjoy bliss for all eternity. Jainism does not believe in a God or Creator—it is atheistic

"Know that the world is uncreated, as time itself is,
Without beginning or end,
And is based on the principles of life and rest.
Uncreated and indestructible, it endures under
The compulsion of its own nature,
Divided into three sections—Hell, Earth and Heaven"

Jainism insists upon a high order of kindliness and non-violence. It enjoins upon the Jain monks a life of extreme asceticism and rigid discipline—striving for perfection.

Buddhism

Buddhism was founded by Gautama Buddha who lived in 5th century B C and was a contemporary of Mahavira. Buddha preached the Middle Way, between extreme asceticism and worldly life. The four noble truths enunciated by him are: (1) All life is inevitably sorrowful; (2) Sorrow and dissatisfaction are due to incessant craving, (3) Sorrow can



MAHAVIRA

Nonviolence and Discipline

be eliminated by ceasing the craving, and (4) This release from sorrow can be done by discipline and moral conduct and spending time in meditation

All individuals in the universe are made of five components form and matter—'rupa', sensations—vedana, perceptions—sanna, psychic and psychological emotions—samkhara; and conscious thought—vinnana The highest state of Bliss is Nirvana—where all individual personality or ego ceases to exist. Nirvana is a glorious state, stainless and undefiled, pure and white, undying, deathless, secure, calm and happy. Nirvana can be achieved anywhere and at any time—while still in the mortal body—and in Parinirvana it blows out

Buddha preached the highest system of ethics and conduct. The noble eight-fold path consists of.—

Right Views
Right Resolve
Right Speech
Right Conduct
Right Livelihood
Right Effort
Right Recollection
and Right Meditation.

Buddha enjoined upon his disciples in his last message· "You must be your own lamps. Hold firm to the Truth as a lamp and a refuge, and do not look to anything beside yourselves A monk becomes his own lamp and refuge by continually looking on his body, feelings, perceptions, moods and ideas in such a manner that he conquers the cravings and depressions of ordinary men and is always strenuous, self-possessed, and collected in mind. Whoever does this will reach Nirvana"

Buddha asked men not to hate but to love

"Never in this world
Is hate appeased by hate.
It is only appeased by love,
This is an Eternal Law.
Victory breeds hatred,
For the defeated lie down in sorrow,
Above victory or defeat,
The calm man dwells in peace."

The doctrine of Emptiness or Sunyavada leads to equanimity.

"All things conditioned are conditioned by ignorance,
And on final analysis they do not exist,
For they and the conditioning ignorance alike are Emptiness
In their essential nature, without power of action."



BUDDHA
Enlightenment and Right Conduct

Sankara

Sankara (788—820 A.D.) is the greatest philosopher that India has produced. He was a South Indian Brahmin born at Kaladi in Kerala State. In the short span of 32 years of his life he composed extensive commentaries on Upanishads and gave them a unified thought in his Advaita philosophy or monism. He travelled all over India and founded a new order of monks (Sankaracharyas) and established Mutts at Sringeri, Puri, Dwaraka and Badrinath Sankara was the most brilliant exponent of Vedanta philosophy. He gave new life to community worship by consecrating many temples from the Kanya Kumari to Srinagar. Sankara's Advaita and Vedanta is the philosophy of modern India—Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh and Radhakrishnan.

Ramanuja

Ramanuja (1017—1137 AD)—another great South Indian from Srirangam, founded the system of Visistadvaita or qualified monism. He and his followers (Alwars) preached Bhakti-yoga—union with God through love and worship.

Madhva

Madhva (13th century), the third great South Indian teacher, preached Dvaita or dualism He believed that God and human soul were distinct, and the human soul can be saved by God's grace

Saivism

Saivism preached by a long line of Tamil Saints (Nayannars) raised the Bhakti-yoga school of philosophy to the loftiest heights They sang some superb devotional songs of pure love of God and compasssion for man:

"In His Love, the Lord punishes so that the sinner
May mend his ways and follow the right.
Bring merit, be it as little as the mustard seed;
But he who hears, believes and cherishes the word,
An inner pilgrimage and cleansing is his need.
Goodness, love, grace and gentleness,
Courtesy, friendship and modesty,
Honesty, penance and chastity,
Charity, respect, reverence and truthfulness,
Purity and self-control,
Wisdom and worship,
All these together are perfect Virtue,
And are the Word of the loving Lord."

The Tamil saints sang of the ethics of non-violence, kindliness, tolerance, compassion, friendliness, benevolence and forgiveness. The Tirukural says:—

"For a kindness done without expecting reward,
Heaven and Earth are hardly adequate recompense.
The joy of the avenger lasts but a day,
The joy of the peacemaker lasts for ever.
They are great who fast and who penance
But they who forgive wrongs are greater.
This is then the highest wisdom,
To return no harm to those that harm you."



GURU NANAK

Faith and Action

IX

RENAISSANCE—TRADITION & MODERNITY

Sikhism

Guru Nanak (1469—1539) founded the Sikh religion. The word "Sikh" is a corruption of the Sanskrit word "Sish", which means disciple. The Muslim invasion of India started from 8th century A.D., and millions of people were forcibly converted to the religion of Mohammed. Islam is opposed to idol-worship, believes in one God, and is opposed to caste distinctions The resilience of Hinduism absorbed the shock of Muslim attack—and in course of seven centuris the Muslim converts continued to observe the general Hindu social pattern But a great religious reformation was taking place for removing dogmatic beliefs, superstitions, rituals and inequalities in society due to caste or class distinctions. The Bhakti movement preached a high order of personal ethics and intense devotion to God. The propounders of this philosophy were the Nayanamars and Alwars in South India, and Ramananda, Gorakhnath, Chaitanya, Kabir, Tulsi Das, Vallabh and Namdev.

Guru Nanak preached religious tolerance, and tried to bring Hindus and Muslims together. He is described as:

"Guru Nanak, the King of Fakirs,
To the Hindu a Guru,
To the Muslim a Pir"

Guru Nanak was followed by nine other Gurus The tenth Guru Gobind Singh, made the Sikhs into a distinctive and dynamic community by making them wear long hair and

beard, and making them carry a sword (kirpan) to protect and fight for ritghteousness.

Sikhism believes in righteous action and prayer to attain purity and truth. Jupji, the Sikh prayer, says:

Not by thought alone,
Can He be known,
Though one thinks
A hundred thousand times.

"Not in solemn silence
Nor in deep meditation.
Though fasting yields an abundance of virtue
It cannot appease hunger for Truth.
No, by none of these,
Nor by a hundred thousand other devices,
Can God be reached.
How then shall Truth be known?
How then shall the veil of false illusion be torn ?
O Nanak, thus runneth the writ divine,
The Righteous Path—let it be thine.

As hands or feet besmirched with slime,
Water washes white·
As garments dark with grime
Rinsed with soap are made light:
So when sin soils the soul
Prayer alone shall make it pure and whole.

Words do not the saint or sinner make,
Action alone is written in the book of fate,
What we sow that alone we reap,
O Nanak, be saved or for ever transmigrate.

Pilgrimage, austerity, mercy, alms-giving and charity.
Bring merit, be it as little as the mustard seed,
But he who hears, believes and cherishes the word,
An inner pilgrimage and cleansing is his need.
"Air, water and earth,
Of these are we made.
Air like the Guru's word gives the breath of life
To the babe born to the great mother earth
Sired by the waters.
The day and night our nurses be
That watch us in our infancy.
In their laps we play
The World is our Playground.
Our acts right and wrong at Thy court shall come to judgement,
Some be seated near Thy seat, some ever kept distant
The toils have ended of those that have worshipped Thee.
O Nanak, their faces are lit with joyful Radiance—many others they set Free"

Reformation in Hinduism

Brahmo Samaj: was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772—1833) It is a rationalist and social reform movement, influenced by impact of Christianity and Western culture

Arya Samaj· was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824—1883). It is a dynamic organisation with the objective of taking Hinduism back to the pristine purity of the Vedas.

Theosophical Society: was founded by Mrs. Annie Besant (1847—1943) It is a synthesis of all religious faiths in the world and adoption of a modernised and liberal Hinduism.

Rama Krishna Mission· was established by Swami Vivekananda (1862—1902) Vivekananda was called the "Cyclonic Hindu", who took America and Western World by the storm He carried the message of Vedanta philosophy to the West. His teacher was Rama Krishna Paramahamsa (1833—1886), a saint who achieved self-realisation and attracted many devotees Vivekananda established Rama Krishna Mission—an organisation of monks to do social service and translate religion into action and service. Vivekananda infused new strength and vitality in-to Hindu religion and philosophy. The Vedanta Societies in America are spreading the message of Hindu philosophy in the Western World.

Gandhism Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869—1948) is acknowledged as the Greatest Man in the world He lived and sacrificed his life in the cause of Truth and Non-violence He struggled relentlessly and made Imperialism quit India He abolished Untouchability and the Purdah which were the scourges of society in India for centuries Gandhian philosophy of action is the only Hope for saving Humanity from Violence and Exploitation.

Gandhı ıs the gift of the Spırit of Indıa to the World. Long Lıve Gandhı

Rabındı anath Tagoı e, Poet Laureate, who was the leader of modernısm, humanısm and ınternatıonalısm ın modern Indıan literature and art, wrote ın hıs Gıtanjalı·

"Where the mınd ıs wıthout fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge ıs free;
Where the world has not been broken up ınto fragments by narrow domestıc walls,
Where words come out from the depth of truth,
Where tıreless strıvıng stretches ıts arms towards perfectıon,
Where clear stream of reason has not lost ıts way ınto the dreary desert sand of dead habıt,
Where the mınd ıs led forward by Thee ınto ever-wıdenıng thought and actıon—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country wake"

X

BHAGAVAD-GITA—PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE & ACTION

The Bhagavad Gita is the grand climax of the epic drama of Life as related in the Mahabharata.

The object of Mahabharata is to teach people the philosophy of life It is in the moment of climax of crisis that Truth gets revealed. Arjuna, as the leader of Pandava armies, had to make the decision of declaring the war against Kauravas on the eve of the great battle of Kurukshetra Like Hamlet, he asked the great question—"To be or not to be" or "to fight or not to fight" Krishna was his charioteer, friend and philosopher Krishna's answer to Arjuna has become the Bhagavad-Gita—a dialogue between Arjuna, Voice of Man—and Lord Krishna, Voice of God.

The Bhagavad-Gita opens with the first sentence·

"What did people do in the field of Righteousness—Dharmakshetra, and in its field of battle—Kurukshetra ?"

Life is a battle, a warfare against forces of evil, a fight between righteousness and unrighteousness, a fight between Dharma—Law, and Adharma—chaos and anarchy.

Every individual, nay every nation, has moments of hesitation and indecision in every day of life. When faced with life's problems, we ask ourselves whether what we do is right or wrong; whether we should act and face the consequences or remain passive and meekly allow evil forces to subdue us. And then we ask ourselves What is victory and defeat ? What is life and death ?

Krishna gave his answer to Arjuna. In doing so he gave his philosophy to all humanity for all time Krishna was an Avatar, an incarnation of God. The Divine nature in

him revealed itself. Krishna revealed his identity with God, and as God spoke in the first person—"I".

The Bhagavad-Gita is called the Gita-Upanishad and gives the essence of all Hindu thought and philosophy. The Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Puranas teach Hindu religion and philosophy. It is impossible for any individual to read and understand all this extensive literature. The Bhagavad-Gita summarises all knowledge and has taken the place of Bible or Quran for the Hindus.

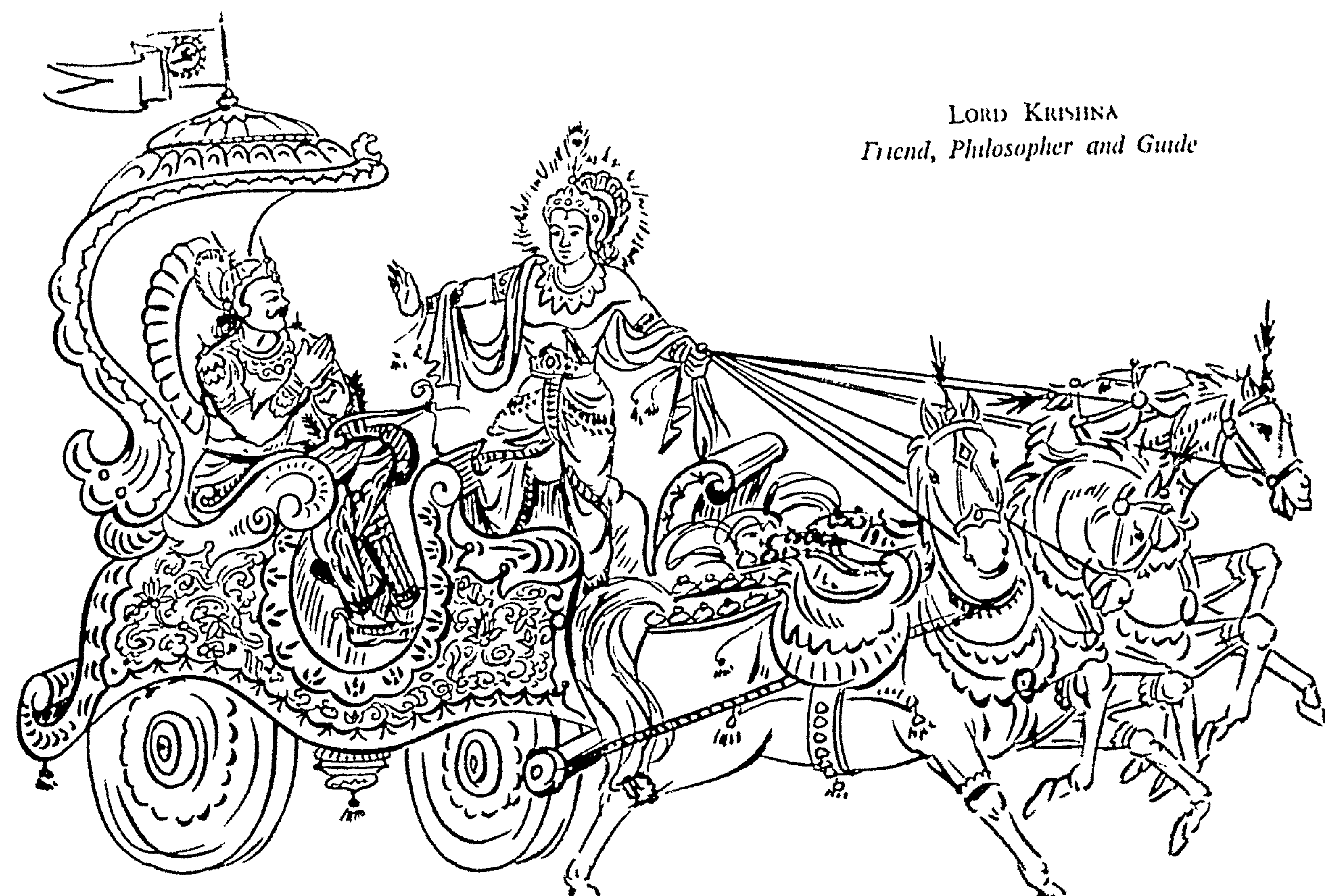
I have condensed the Bhagavad-Gita and given it a free rendering for the modern world to appreciate and absorb. In the earlier chapters I have given an essence of the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas—tracing the evolution of the Hindu mind which finally blossomed in the beautiful Gita Bhagaad-Gita is the Song Celestial, and in it you will hear the crescendo of the grand symphony of the Hindu thought—its rhythm and divine Music The Song Celestial will tone up and tune up every man to attain Perfection

The world's greatest writers, poets and dramatists have tried to portray life and probe into the innermost secrets of emotions, passions, conflicts and suffering. Great religious teachers and prophets have given the meaning and solution to the problems of man.

The greatest of poets and dramatists, Shakespeare, posed the eternal question·

TO BE, OR NOT TO BE: THAT IS THE QUESTION:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them ? To die: to sleep:
No more, and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep:
To sleep. perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin ? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of ?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn away,
AND LOSE THE NAME OF ACTION.



LORD KRISHNA
Friend, Philosopher and Guide

BHAGAVAD-GITA

CHAPTER I

The Question:

What should people do in the field of life, in the battle of Righteousness ?

Chapter II

The Answer:

Life Eternal

Yield not to unmanliness

Do not grieve for those whom you need not grieve for.

Wise men do not grieve over death or life.

Life is eternal. there was never a time when you and I did not exist: nor do we ever cease to exist hereafter

Soul is eternal: it remains in this body through childhood, manhood, and old age: it takes another body after death

Heat and cold, pleasure and pain are transient, you should endure them.

The unreal does not exist: the real does not cease to exist.

He who thinks that he dies or causes death does not know the truth

The soul is not slain when the body is slain.

The soul is eternal and indestructible: it is uncreated and unchanging

Just as a person leaves off a worn-out garment and puts on a new one, so does the soul leave out of a worn-out body, and enter a new body.

The self goes through a perpetual cycle of death and birth, and you should not grieve about death

What is born is sure to die; what has died is sure to be reborn

Fight for Right

You should not falter to do your duty, and you should fight for the right

If you fail to fight in the battle of righteousness, you will lose your virtue and commit sin

People will charge you with cowardice: Infamy is worse than death

If you are victorious you will enjoy the kingdom on earth: if you are slain you will enjoy the glory in heaven

Without minding pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, fight for the right This gives you virtue.

Work

True knowledge is not for those who recite the letter of the Scriptures and who perform rituals for the sake of gaining power and enjoyment.

Those who have a craving for earthly possession do not have discrimination between right and wrong

The letter of the Vedas is like a small pond submerged in a flood of the knowledge of experience

You have the right to work you should not work with the desire of enjoying the fruits of work nor should you be attached to inaction

Yoga is skill in action you should yoke your intelligence with the Divine, and engage in action not worrying about success or failure

You will then be not afflicted by disappointment and sorrow.

This is true wisdom which gives you freedom from the bondage of life's troubles of acquisition and possession.

Self-Control

Self-control leads you to purity of intelligence.

If you dream about sensual pleasures, you get attached to them

Attachment leads to desire; desire leads to passion and anger: anger destroys intelligence

The disciplined mind gives you purity of spirit: it eliminates sorrow, and gives you peace of mind: without peace there can be no happiness

Waters get submerged in the ocean which does not overflow the shores· even like the ocean should you contain and absorb your desires

Abandon your ego and sense of mine and thine· then you will have peace

Fix your mind on God, and you will achieve the bliss of God (Brahma-Nirvana)

CHAPTER III

Duty and Action

By withdrawing yourself from work and active life, you cannot achieve perfection

You cannot remain even for a moment without working the impulses of nature force you into activity your body mechanism is ceaselessly working to maintain your life

Do your allotted work free from selfishness Activity in life is a supreme sacrifice

God gives you His gifts he who enjoys His gifts without sharing with others is a thief and a sinner.

Nature works and gives rain rain creates food· food nourishes creatures· it is all continuous work and sacrifice

He who does not help to keep the wheel of nature in motion, lives in vain.

The world follows the example and standards set by an active leader

Even God is eternally engaged in work If He ceases to work the Universe will fall apart

World-order can be maintained only if the learned people work with unselfishness

The enlightened man works in the service of God, and gives a lead to others

It is better to do one's own duty however imperfectly fulfilled, than to attempt to do somebody else's work however perfectly it may be done

Even as fire is enveloped by smoke, embryo by womb, and mirror by dust, so is knowledge enveloped by passion and desire

Greater than the power of the senses is mind, greater than the mind is intelligence, and greater than intelligence is He.

Chapter IV

God Incarnate

God is the Lord and creator of all creatures yet He appears among His creatures to reveal Himself.

Whenever righteousness declines, and unrighteousness arises, He descends on earth as an Incarnation.

For protection of the good and for destroying the wicked and the evil, God appears again and again from age to age

Purify yourself from passion, fear and anger, take refuge in God, and you will realise God. He will accept you

He who sees action in the seemingly inactive nature, and remains inactive in useless action, is a wise man and accomplishes his work

He who is contented, and accepts whatever he gets, and who is free from jealousy and covetousness attains supreme freedom.

He who considers all work as sacrifice and oblation to God, realises God.

Know that by humble reverence, by inquiry and self-less service, you will see the Truth

Even the most sinful man can be saved by true knowledge

The fire of wisdom burns all sins to ashes

Knowledge is the unequalled purifier.

He who has not faith and who is ever doubting, is ignorant and will never get happiness

Only he who has faith in God will attain peace and happiness.

Chapter V

True Renunciation

Unselfish performance of duty is better than renunciation and retirement from action in the world

True renunciation is absence of hatred and of undue attachment to worldly desires.

Renunication of worldly desires and pure action with unselfishness are one and the same

He who has a pure mind, who has controlled his senses, and who sees his spirit as one with all humanity, is not tainted by his works.

Such a man realises that he is the instrument of God. He is unaffected by the sins in the world

God is pure He is not affected by the sins or virtues of man.

Always think of God be ever conscious of God be always devoted to God : your sins will be washed away.

All men are equal in the eyes of God . therefore get established in God

God is the friend of all beings A man who realises this attains peace.

Chapter VI

Yoga or Perfection

Renunication is disciplined activity. The true sanyasi and the true yogi is he who is engaged in activity without any thought of enjoying the fruits for himself.

Let a man lift himself by his self · let him not let himself down · your self is your only friend : your self is your only enemy.

He is an excellent man who treats impartially his friends and enemies, who is considerate to the virtuous as well as the sinful, and who is just to all.

A yogi should concentrate his mind and meditate on God.

He should practice yoga for the purification of his soul.

Practising celibacy and self-control, without fear and with serene mind, he should think intently on God

The yogi who harmonises himself with humanity attains peace and abides in God

Yoga is not for him who eats too much or abstains too much from eating · it is not for him who sleeps too much or who keeps awake too much He must exercise moderation in all habits

By such mediation and yoga a man sees Truth which is beyond the reach of his senses or intelligence and he gets supreme delight

Tranquility can be attained by steadfast mind

Supreme happiness comes to the yogi whose mind is peaceful, whose passions are subdued, and who has established himself in God

He who sees God in all beings, sees all beings in God God is not lost to him and he is not lost to God.

The mind is difficult to curb, but it can be controlled by constant practice and non-attachment to desires

The yogi who strives with assiduity gets purified from all sins, and perfecting himself attains the highest goal

He who worships God always abiding in Him becomes dearest to God.

Chapter VII

God the Refuge

Among thousands of men, scarcely one seeks perfection· among thousands of such seekers scarcely one realises the Truth

Nature consists of earth, water, air, ether, energy, mind, understanding and ego

The higher aspect of nature is the spirit and soul

God causes creation and dissolution of the world

He is the taste in the waters, light in the sun and moon, vibrations in ether, and vital force in man.

He is the life in all existence and spirituality in the saints.

He is the intelligence of the intelligent, glory of the glorious

He has created the gunas—harmonious (sattvika), passionate (rajasa) and slothful (tamasa)

His Maya (mystery) can be found only by taking refuge in Him

People worship God when they are in distress, or when they seek earthly gifts, or when they seek knowledge, or when they seek wisdom

Of these the worshipper, who seeks wisdom with single-minded devotion is the best, and is beloved of God

Whatever a devotee asks, God grants

Those who take refuge in Him attain salvation

Chapter VIII

God the Supreme Being

The essential nature of the Supreme Being (Brahman) is called the Self

Karma is the creative force in existence—its cause and effect

All created things are mutable in nature

The cosmic spirit is embodied in the body as self

When at the moment of dying a man thinks intently on God, and utters the syllable 'AUM' (Brahman) he goes to God without doubt

He who constantly meditates on God, and thinks of nothing else, he is a true yogi and he reaches God

When a man achieves salvation, he will not get into the cycle of birth and rebirth

All things are seen in the light of day they are not seen in the darkness of night but they again are seen in the light of following day

The Unmanifested Eternal Being remains even when all created beings are dissolved

Light and darkness (day and night) are the two sides of nature's phenomenon A man who reaches God remains in nature's phenomenon. A man who reaches God remains in Eternal Light.

Chapter IX

God the Father

God, though Unseen and Unmanifested, abides in all men.
God is the Spirit in all worship and sacrifice
He is the Father of the world, its Mother, its Protector, and its Purifier
He is the creation and dissolution God is your Friend, He is your Refuge
God accepts whatever is offered to Him with a pure and devoted heart.
God is impartial and compassionate
Even the vilest sinner is saved by Him, if the sinner worships Him
So be devoted to God · worship Him with faith and hope : you shall be saved by Him

Chapter X

God the Giver

Understanding, knowledge, clear vision, patience, calmness, self-control and truth, non-violence, compassion, contentment, charity and saintliness are all the Gifts of God.
Out of His supreme Compassion, God destroys the darkness of ignorance by the Light of wisdom.
God is the Supreme Abode He is the Surpeme Purifier.
He is in the innermost hearts of men
He is the Secret of Silence

CHAPTER XI

God—Univerasl Form and Human Form

Behold ! the face of God is seen in His Infinite Form in the magnificent splendour and power of the phenomenon of the Universe . the blinding brilliance of the myriads of suns and stars in the sky.

He is the all-consuming Time and Nature.

It is a terrible and terrifying spectacle.

Behold the same God in His kindly Human Form.

Krishna is the Incarnation of God, so that man can see Him directly

God is full of Grace and kindliness

Every Man and Woman is incarnation of God

CHAPTER XII

Devotion to God

It is difficult to contemplate on God in his abstract Absolute Form as the Imperishable, the Undefinable, the Unmanifested, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchanging, and the Immobile.

It is easier to know Him as a Personal God by meditation or worship or by pure devotion.

By performing selfless work and service to humanity, and trusting in God, you get perfection.

The true devotee is he who has no ill-will to any being, who is friendly and compassionate and patient, who is free from egoism, and who is even-minded in pain and pleasure

The true devotee does not run away from worldly activity nor does the world avoid him

The true devotee is undisturbed by blame or praise; he is silent and restrained in his speech, and contented with what he gets

Such a devotee is dearest to God

Chapter XIII

Field and Knower

The body is the Field : the Soul is the Knower of the Field

The body is con tituted of elements, senses, mind ad self-sense (ego)

Desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, intelligence and will are the characteristics of the body

True knowledge is obtained by humility, integrity, non-violence, patience, uprightness, service, purity, faith. self-control, control of objects of senses; self-effacement non-attachment to worldly objects, equanimity of mind, and unswerving devotion to God

God pervades everything He is in the senses and gunas—He is yet free from them.

He is within all beings, and is yet without them

He appeares to be far far away, yet He is nearest to you and within you

He is One Yet He is manifested in Infinite Forms

He is the Light of lights He is Knowledge, Object of knowledge and its Goal

The body is the vehicle and agent, through which the soul experiences joy and sorrow, and discriminates right and wrong

The Supreme Spirit is the Supporter, the Witness and the Supreme Lord

You can know the Self in your self by yourself. You can know IT by intelligence and by action You can know IT by worship and devotion.

He who sees God equally abiding in all beings, sees the Truth

He who sees all actions are done by Will of God, he realises that man is not the doer, and he sees the Truth

As the one Sun gives light to all the world, so is the one God, illuminating the entire Field, the World of Becoming.

Chapter XIV

Gunas—Goodness

God is the Father of all beings.

The body is bound down by the three Gunas—Sattva (goodness), Rajas (passion) and Tamas (inactivity).

Sattva—goodness, causes illumination and health.

Rajas—passion, causes attraction, attachment and craving.

Tamas—inactivity, causes ignorance, indolence and negligence

Goodness overcomes passion and inactivity. It arises out of knowledge.

Chapter XV

God—the All-pervading

Seek refuge in God from Whom has come forth this world.
The soul in each man is a fragment of His own Self
God is lodged in the hearts of all . He is in their memory and knowledge.
He is the Imperishable . He sustains the World

Chapter XVI

Good & Evil

The Divine nature in man is fearlessness, purity of mind wise use of knowledge, concentration, charity, self-control, sacrificing spirit, study of scriptures, austerity and uprightness.

The Divine Conduct is :

Non-violence, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, aversion to fault-finding, compassion to all living beings, freedom from covetousness, gentleness, modesty, and steadiness.

The Divine Strength is .

Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from malice and excessive pride

The evil-nature in man is ostentation, arrogance, excessive pride, anger, harshness, ignorance.

The evil man does not believe in God. In his ignorance he does cruel deeds, and becomes his own enemy and destroyer.

The evil character is filled with insatiable desires, is full of hypocrisy, is obssessed with innumerable cares; he is given to lust and anger, and he strives to amass hoards of wealth by unjust means.

The ignorant fool is filled with ego—he believes "this is done by me, this is mine, this enemy is killed by me, I am the might"

He is self-conceited and obstinate. Such evil-minded man ruins his soul and goes to Hell.

The good man should avoid the three gates leading to Hell—lust, anger and greed.

Chapter XVII

Faith in God

Man is of the nature of his faith : Verily he is what his faith makes him.

Worship of God, respect for teachers and the learned, purity, uprightness, continence and non-violence are said to be the discipline of the body

Speech which gives no offence, which is truthful, pleasant and beneficial, and recitation of Scriptures, become the discipline of speech.

Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-control, purity of mind are the discipline of the mind

That man is good who practices the three disciplines of his body, speech and mind

That discipline which is done to demand respect, honour and reverence for the sake of pompous show is unstable and not lasting.

That discipline which is done by self-mortification and obstinacy is useless.

Charity

That Charity which is given without expectation of any returns, which is given as one's duty and in the right cause, in the right place and in the right time is good

That charity which is given at the wrong place or time, and to an unworthy person and which is given with contempt and to an unworthy person and which is given with contempt is useless

Whatever charity is given, whatever penance is performed, whatever rites are observed without faith, they are unreal and useless

CHAPTER XVIII

EPILOGUE

Right Conduct

True renunciation is giving up such action which expects rewards.

Renunciation of duty which ought to be done is not right

He who gives up action because it is painful or from fear of suffering is doing wrong

It is impossible for any man to cease from activity :

The wise man does his duty however disagreeable it may be, and does agreeable duty without expectation of its fruits.

The five factors of action are body, mind, ego, work and Providence

A man is not himself the sole agent of action.

Knowledge is the instrument, action is the object and self is the agent these are three aspects of action

Action which is performed without reward, regardless of attachment or hatred, is right

Action which is done to gratify selfish desires, which is done through ignorance, and without regard to consequences, loss or injury is wrong

That understanding is good which distinguishes action from non-action, which knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what binds the soul and what gives it freedom

That happiness is good which though bitter in the beginning is like nectar at the end, and which springs from a clear understanding of Self

Serenity, self-control, austerity, purity. forbearance, uprightness, wisdom, knowledge and faith in religion are the characteristics of a learned man (true Brahmin)

If a man is devoted to his own duty, he attains perfection.

It is better to carry out one's own duty limited by one's own nature however imperfectly done, than try to carry out another man's duty however perfectly it may be done

Enlightenment and Eternal Bliss

With pure understanding, and self-restraint, removing all distractions and attractions of worldly pleasures, remaining in solitude and depending on himself, with moderation in habits and controlling his body, mind and speech, casting aside his ego, arrogance and sense of possession and with tranquillity in his mind, a man becomes enlightened

Such an enlightened man treats all beings alike

Through devotion, he realises Truth and God.

Surrender yourself to God, take refuge in Him You will get His Eternal Grace.

By his Grace you will obtain Supreme Peace and Happiness. This is the Secret of all Secrets.

He who teaches this supreme Secret to His devotees is beloved of God.

He who listens to this Teaching with Faith shall attain Supreme Happiness and Eternal Bliss.

XI

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

What are the distinguishing features of Hindu society? They are the four castes (Varnas), the four stages in life (Asramas), the four objects (Purushartas), and the four paths (Yogas) How do we modernise these traditional concepts?

Caste In Vedic society people were divided into four castes—Brahmins, Kshattriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras The Brahmins were the intellectuals, philosophers, priests and leaders on spiritual matters The Kshattriyas were rulers, administrators, fighters and defenders of the country The Vaisyas were the traders and agents of distribution, and looked to the economic affairs of the society The Sudras were the agriculturists, workers and producers. The society was conceived as a Super-Body· the Brahmin as the head, the Kshattriya as the hands, the Vaisya as the trunk, and the Sudra as the legs In the human body every part is of equal and vital importance—the head is not superior to the feet, and the hands are not superior to the trunk As in the trade guilds of mediaeval times in England, the castes protected their hereditary vocations by a rigid caste-system, analogous to the class system in other countries With the spread of education—the caste barriers have now disappeared, and every man in India has the fullest freedom to follow his intellectual and economic pursuits, and every man has a "Brahmin-Kshattriya-Vaisya-Sudra" complex in him. All men are equal in the modern Hindu society

Asramas The life of a man is divided into four stages or Asramas of, say, 20 years each. Brahmcharya, Grihasta,

Vanaprasta and Sanyasa Brahmcharya is the student stage—education, training and preparation for life Grihasta is the householder stage, when a man gets married, rears a family and builds a home, and is engaged in working and acquiring material possession During Vanaprasta, a man slowly retires from his professional and hectic activity in securing wealth and managing his family affairs, and he devotes his major time for spiritual preparation Finally, during Sanyasa, he retires completely from his family and home worries and responsibilities, and enlarges his field of selfless activity for the social and spiritual progress of the society as a whole. He then outgrows his limited family, and considers the whole community as his family Sanyasa is *not* a *negative* process It is renunciation only of his individual, narrow and selfish objectives It is utilization of his experience and knowledge to the welfare of the whole society It is devotion and service to God, and fulfilment of his mission in life Even Buddha, after getting his Enlightenment, returned to society to serve it

Even in the past, Sanyasa was achieved only by a very few superior souls In modern world, the essence of Sanyasa has to be practised in the later part of one's life After discharging his duties to his family, a man must devote his time to self-less service of the society, and engage in philosophical, social and political leadership

Purushartas The four objects, or guiding philosophies in life, are the Purushartas Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha

Artha is materialistic, realistic and pragmatic philosophy in life

Kama is existential and utilitarian aspect in life Life has no meaning if it is not lived and satisfied in the sensual sense Passions and emotions are inherent in man, and they should

be experienced and controlled to understand the beauty and aesthetics of life. It is said that even Sankaracharya had to undergo the experience of Kama before he could be acknowledged as a philosopher.

Dharma is the knowledge and belief in religious and spiritual principles, morality and right conduct—all of which make us realise God.

Finally, Moksha is salvation or communion with God. In death a man is released from the bonds and confines of his physical body, and his soul gets absorbed and dissolved in the Absolute.

Yogas. The four Yogas are the paths through which knowledge can be obtained

Raja Yoga is the path of dynamic activity and utilisation of emotional and creative energy.

Karma Yoga is the path of duty and right conduct, morality and understanding the inexorable laws of cause and effect.

Jana Yoga is the path of intellectual activity, obtaining knowledge through meditation, inspiration, balance and wisdom

Bhakti Yoga is the path of love and devotion, and implicit faith and surrender to God to get His Grace

Raja Yoga (Action), Karma Yoga (Duty), Jana Yoga (Knowledge) and Bhakti Yoga (Love) are *not* independent paths They are the four wheels of the vehicle of progress Every man must simultaneously practice action, duty, knowledge and love In different individuals, and in various stages of his life, and depending on his own natural aptitude one of them may dominate The personality of man must have integrated in him action, duty, knowledge and love.

Hinduism is *not* a negative and pessimistic view of life; nor is it a religion of other-worldliness or fatalism.

Hinduism did not accept the Buddhistic belief that life is full of misery and sorrow, and that is why Buddhism did not grow in the land of its birth

Hinduism takes an optimistic view of life The purpose in life, Sansara, is to live rightly and correctly Life is Fun and Sport—Leela of God, Hindu philosophy is a summation of existentialism, utilitarianism, materialism, realism and idealism Above all, it believes in Humanism Hinduism brings God down to earth, and worships His Incarnations and Avataras It worships God in Man, and Man in God. Hindu way of life is Godliness.

XII

INDIA'S MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

In the preceding chapters, I have traced the evolution of philosophical thought in India over five thousand years Philosophical thought has its impact on the society, and on its way of life The progress of society is governed by history, growth of science and technology, and its everchanging politics and economics The evolution of society influences its philosophical thought and the sense of values It must therefore be remembered that philosophy and social progress are dynamic forces which constantly keep changing and moving by their mutual inter-action

The present is the result of past experience and knowledge which become tradition The future gets moulded by present action and thought—which is modernity. It is here that modern thinkers and philosophers play their important role.

We are fortunate to live in this twentieth century witnessing fantastic changes, thanks to science and technology. We have ventured into space, and we will have men on the moon in a few years time. So what ?

Simultaneously, we are having orbiting round the world nuclear weapons which will rain mass annihilation by the pressing of a button by one individual. Suppose the button is pressed purely by accident. Atheists and agonostics say that existence is all by accident! Then annihilation will also be caused by that accident. If ever there was Sin committed by man, it is this Sin of the threat of total and complete destruction of mankind

What is all this due to ? The answer is one word—FEAR. This FEAR can be eliminated by one word—LOVE

Nehru preached Neutralism and Co-existence· Live and let live It is the boldest and truest philosophy against Fear. Gandhi preached Non-violence in thought, word and deed

India has this message to the world Work for Peace and Righteousness. The Spirit of Man will win Peace for all mankind!

OM! SHANTI! SHANTI! SHANTI!